

BANDWAGON



May June 1970



CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S

BANDWAGON



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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The illustration on this issue's cover is a window card used by the Ringling Barnum Circus in 1937.

The original is lithographed in six colors, with the frame border in gold. It is half the size of a standard window card.

This illustration is part of our continuing tribute to the Ringling-Barnum Circus during its 100th year. Pfening Collection.

IMPORTANT DUES NOTICE

CHS Treasurer Julian Jimenez reports that as of June 1, 1970 only 2/3 of our members and subscribers have sent in their \$6.00.

Please send your dues and subscriptions at once to the treasurer in the envelope provided.

If your payment is not received by July 1, 1970 your name will be removed from the mailing list and you will not receive the July-August issue of the Bandwagon.

We are sure that you will not wish to miss a single issue of the Bandwagon. Upcoming articles include a three part coverage of the Ben Davenport Dailey Bros. Circus; part two of Richard Reynolds Circus Rhinos article; an article on Circus Grifters, by Adrain Sharpe; photo coverage and history of the Tom Tucker built cages on Christy Bros. and a complete history of the Tom Mix Circus both by Stuart Thayer; and many other really great features that you will not wish to miss.

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**SARASOTA CIRCUS CELEBRITY
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The John Ringling residence "Ca' d'Zan" was the scene of a reception honoring La Norma Fox, aerialists. Over 300 circus greats were in attend-

ance, including William Heyer, Karl Walenda, Earl Shipley, Mary Jane Miller, Bruno Zacchini, Merle Evans and Skinny Goe.

Also on hand was Harold Alzana, the first Sarasota celebrity to be so honored.

The celebrities to be honored are selected by a committee of the Showfolks of Sarasota and John H. Hurdle, Curator of the Ringling Museum of the Circus.

**CIRCUS HALL OF FAME
AWARDS TO BE ANNOUNCED**

Col. Bill Naramore advises that the annual announcements of the newly-elected "Circus Greats" to be enshrined at the Circus Hall of Fame may be released during the TV show "All Star Circus-Circus Hall of Fame", scheduled for September 12 at 9 p.m. (EST), on the NBC network.

The TV show was taped in Sarasota on April 17, with an audience of 3,500.

The selection of the "Circus Greats" was made by the National Awards Committee during a meeting in Sarasota on January 10.

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**BACK ISSUES OF
BANDWAGON MAGAZINE**

1961	Sept. - Oct. - Nov. (one issue)
1962	November December
1963	January February March April September October November December
1964	January February July August September October November December
1965	January February March April May June November December
1966	All six issues
1967	All six issues
1968	All six issues
1969	All six issues

You will note that there are far fewer back issues on this list, we suggest you order now before others are gone. While they last \$1.00 each, we pay the postage, by book rate.

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The ORGAN IS THE WORLD'S LEADING MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR CIRCUS AND VARIETY.

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The ORGAN contains contributions in German, English, and French and is distributed world-wide. The magazine's address lists represent a "Who's Who" in the world of the circus and variety.

There are about 50 pages of news columns, stories and pictures in an average edition, and 100 pages of advertisements, many on multi-colored art paper.

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INCOMPARABLE IN ALL THE WORLD OF AMUSEMENT



JOHN ROBINSON'S CIRCUS

STANDING ALONE IN GREATNESS AND COMPLETENESS

SEASON OF 1928

By Albert Conover

This is a story of the John Robinson Circus and some of the adversity which it encountered by it during the 1928 season.

It was my original intention to write a short article relating to five photographs of a train derailment at Bloomfield Jct., Shelbyville, Kentucky, that were given to me by a Mr. Louis Collins; but, because of a mislocation written on the back of these photos, it took a considerable amount of research to properly locate the correct site. It was during the research period that I found out the show had a very rough season, and I decided to expand this article to cover the whole season. What turned out to be more surprising was the lack of photographs taken during this season of this particular circus, especially since it was not a Depression year.

The winter months of 1927-28 brought some activity around the John Robinson Circus Winterquarters at West Baden, Indiana, while it was preparing for the upcoming season. The American Circus Corporation, owners of the John Robinson Circus, announced there would be a few changes in the management of the show. Jerry Mugivan announced in the January 14, 1928, issue of *The Billboard* that Louis B. Chase would be named the new Manager, replacing Sam B. Dill, and William Thompson would be named Assistant Manager. Sam B. Dill would then be named the Assistant Manager of the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus, to assist Dan Odom.

Some of the other personnel who were signed by the John Robinson Circus were Wade Zumwalt, Band Director for the fourth season; Robert Thornton, Equestrian Director; Rex de Rosselle, Press Agent, who also rewrote and produced "The King Solomon and Queen of Sheba Spec"; Harry LaPearl, Producing Clown; and Col. Sam B. Dawson, Veterinarian and, it might be said, a part-time press agent, with all the

stories he gave out to the newspapers and luncheon clubs.

Also signed were two wild animal acts (Mable Stark's Tigers and Terrell Jacobs' Lions); Arthur Hopper, General Agent; and Ralph G. Lockett as Secretary of the Advance. It was also announced that there would be no parade that year.

In January 1928, the John Robinson Circus purchased eighteen all-new, steel, 72-foot railroad cars from the Mt. Vernon Car Company, Mt. Vernon, Illinois. This was the last of the American Circus Corporation Shows to receive these new-style cars. They consisted of 12 flats, 5 stocks, and 1 elephant car. The cost of these new cars was \$51,132.28,

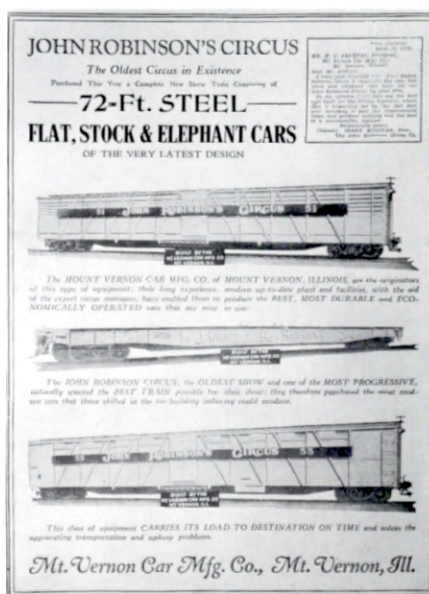
which included a \$10,500 trade-in for some of their old-style, 60-foot wooden cars. These figures of the cost of the train and other figures used in this article were compiled from the John Robinson Circus' 1928 Daily Ledger Books, now located at the Ringling Museum of the Circus, Sarasota, Florida. These new railroad cars arrived at the West Baden, Winterquarters about April 6.

According to the Schenectady, New York, *Union Star*, the train was painted basically yellow. Illustrations of these three styles of cars were printed in *The Billboard* (Photo No. 1). A second illustration of the old-style, 60-foot, wooden flat car (used c. 1927) is shown in Photo No. 2. Not all of the cars from the old train were involved in the trade—several of the remaining cars were sold individually and the remainder were purchased by the Monon Railroad for \$800.

Besides the purchase of the new train, other notable purchases were made, including a 1926 Farm Mack Truck, \$202.50; eighteen baggage horses from Sells-Floto Circus, \$4,117; two water buffalos, \$450; and two elephants from George L. Miller, \$6,000. This latter purchase brought the elephant herd to ten. The show also sold two tigers to the Haag Bros. Circus for \$500.

According to their ledger, the circus showed a balance of \$80,370 on February 1; but in order to help get the show on the road, they received a \$13,000 loan on April 13 from the American Circus Corporation. On opening day, April 21, their resources were down to \$1,800; so they received an additional loan of \$5,000 from Jerry Mugivan to help move the show.

The John Robinson Circus was now ready to open its new season on Saturday, April 21, at West Baden. This show was to travel on 25 cars, including a new, all-steel advance car assisted by



1. Mt. Vernon Car Co. ad showing the new Robinson rolling stock. *The Billboard* 30 June 1928.

a brigade of six Chevrolet trucks. The performance was to be practically all new, with many new acts signed for the season. The dress rehearsals were held on Friday night before the opening, and it began to rain hard, continuing through the night. There are several written accounts about this, including one by Karl K. Knecht in the C.F.A.'s official magazine, *The White Tops*, which together give the following description of the events.

The morning of April 21 found the Lost River out of its banks and the water rushing down into the valley, engulfing the lot. The water was 2½ feet deep on the lot, and still rising. The show started an immediate evacuation, pulling the wagons to higher ground. By noon, the water was 6 feet deep and the show was forced to cancel the opening date. The water did no reported damage to props or animals, but the cages were removed from the lot with water over the hubs of the wheels.

The removing of the big top was another major problem. The tent, which was used the previous year fell apart. The men eventually had to go out into the water on flat bed wagons to remove the poles and other rigging, but they had to leave the stakes in the ground. They finally got the show torn down and loaded by late Sunday afternoon, and they left West Baden at 8:15 p.m. for Louisville, Kentucky, to make the necessary repairs. This unexpected move forced the cancellation of Evansville, Indiana, April 23, and Owensboro, Kentucky, April 24.

With their big top beyond repair, another old tent was rushed into service; but extensive repairs had to be made to it. A new tent was ordered immediately, but this one did not catch up with the show until Augusta, Maine, June 2. The replacement tent which barely made it this far was sold for rags at Portland, for \$200.

The John Robinson Circus was reopened in Louisville, Kentucky, on

3. King Solomon, Queen of Sheba Spec., 1929, a holdover from 1928. Atwell photo from the Circus World Museum.



2. 1927 Robinson train showing flats replaced in 1928. Atwell photo from the Circus World Museum.

Wednesday, April 25, under clear skies, but with cool weather. The opening production number was called "King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba" written and directed by Rex de Rosselle. This was a modern version of the same production which was used on the John Robinson Circus in the 1890's and 1900's. The entire program was as follows:

Display 1 — King Solomon and Queen of Sheba Spec.

Display 2 — Unrideable Mules — Carlos Carreon; Trained Mules — Frank Byron.

Display 3 — Dogs and Football-Kicking Horses — Haven Feaster and Rudy Rudynoff; Dogs and Football-Kicking Horses — Harold Nickalson and Carlos Carreon.

Display 4 — Pony Drill — Pearl Byron; Royal Bengal Tiger Riding an Elephant; Pony Drill — Ova Thornton.

Display 5 — The Cooks — acrobats; Bardwell Bros. — acrobats.

Display 6 — Dogs & Ponies — Miss Frances; Tiger Act — Mable Stark; Dogs & Ponies — Miss Shirley.

Display 7 — Web Number with the Flying Kellys.

Display 8 — Camels & Horses — Dewey

Butler; Lion Act — Capt. Terrell Jacobs; Camels & Horses — Frank Byron.

Display 9 — Rings 1 & 3 — 24 Liberty Horses, presented by Rudy Rudynoff and Robert Thornton.

Display 10 — Mable Stark — Wrestling Rajah, Royal Bengal Tiger.

Display 11 — Clowns.

Display 11 — Clowns.

Display 12 — Concert Announcement

Display 13 — Flora Benini — Equestrenne; Johnny Carreia, Rider Somersaulting from 1 Horse to Another; Ruth Carreia — Equestrienne.

Display 14 — Elephants trained by William Emery; presented by Alma Dedie, Stella Cronin, and Madge Fowler.

Display 15 — Clowns.

Display 16 — Walter Grice & Co. — Equestrians; Rudynoffs with Rudy — Equestrians; Johnny Correia Troupe — Equestrians.

Display 17 — Concert Announcement.

Display 18 — Clowns.

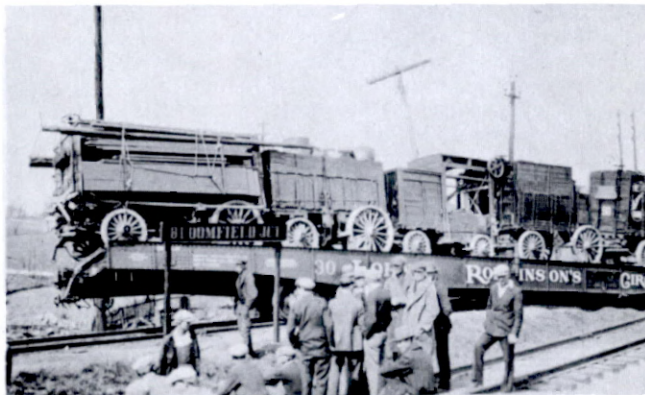
Display 19 — Miss Tetu Harriman — Wire Act; Walter Powell — Wire Act; Dorothy Jacques — Wire Act.

Display 20 — 7 Molays — Arab Acrobatic Act.

Display 21 — Butterfly Acts.

Display 22 — 5 Walkers — Aerial Bar Act.

4. Derailment at Bloomfield, Kentucky, 26 April 1928, Author's Collection.





Display 23 — Eddie Reese — Human Bridge.

Display 24 — John Robinson Horses — Manage Act.

Display 25 — High Jumping Horses.

Display 26 — Hippodrome Races.
Concert

Carlos Carreon, Dewey Butler, Ed Davis, Trudy Lomax, Frank Byron, Etta Carreon, Anna Butler, Pearl Byron, Bobby Livingston, Sioux Indians.

A good over-all review of the performance, appearing in the Schenectady, New York, paper, gave the following description of the performance:

"The greatest single feature of the performance was the opening spectacle, called a modern version of 'King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.' The pageant showed the queen of the Nile, troubled by the waywardness of her people, coming to seek the counsel of Solomon, famed for his wisdom. The procession of the queen coming from her boats into the presence of the king wound about the tent, a long file of great beasts in glittering harness drawing jeweled chariots, elephants with beautiful women in swaying howdahs, hundreds of slaves and attendants, and finally the great car of the queen herself, drawn by six lordly camels.

"Solomon commanded a great celebration to be given in honor of the illustrious queen. Magicians, minstrels, and dancing girls joined in a gorgeous demonstration culminating in the magic appearance of dancers from three vases. The lights were turned down and a very pretty ballet was executed by colored footlights. Then the queen and her entourage returned to their barges in another great procession."

Not all the reporters were in total agreement with this production number, as several were highly critical of the spec. For example, at Greensboro, North Carolina, the reporter stated, "the procession was somewhat weak as a spectacle . . . much of the first

5. Another view of the derailment. Cars in photos 4, 5, & 6 "blew the arrow" and headed out towards nearby Shelbyville.

twenty minutes of the performance was a meaningless cavorting. Then the circus folks got down to business and put on a good show for the remainder of the evening."

Another reporter at Rutland, Vermont, described it as "both colorful and amusing." Describing some of the performers as bored, he had to laugh when "an Egyptian servant mopped his brow with a red bandana," while the "cries of 'Ice Cream!' 'Soda Pop!' and 'Buy an unbreakable monkey!'" punctuated the King's and Queen's song about the pale Egyptian Moon." This same spec was repeated again for the 1929 season, and Photo No. 3 illustrates this production number.

The 1928 John Robinson's Circus carried two wild animal acts this particular year — Mable Stark who worked her 14

6. Third view of the cars which went down the Shelbyville cut.



tigers, and Terrell Jacobs (Jacques) who worked his 7 lions. Miss Stark also worked a wrestling tiger act, and, I believe, Terrell Jacobs had the riding-tiger-and-elephant act.

Other feature acts included the Rudyoffs, Frank Byron, Carlos Carreon, Walter Grice & Co., the 7 Molay Acrobats, the Aerial Kellys, Tetu Harri-man, Walter Powell, etc.

One of the biggest hits of the show was a clown number featuring a funny Ford which was rigged to appear to drive itself, also being equipped with firecrackers, spraying water, and other trick antics.

Another act that drew many notices was that of Eddy Reese. He would lie on the ground and an assistant would drive an automobile over his chest. These automobiles were borrowed from local agencies in exchange for advertising.

The Wild West Concert was under the direction of Carlos Carreon and the program included trick riding, roping, and Indian dances.

The band was reported to have been a 20-piece organization under the direction of Wade Zumwalt. It consisted of 15 brasses, 3 woodwinds, 1 drummer, and an air calliope. Their uniforms were green and white. One reporter's review of the band was that throughout the performance, they raced through the score with the woodwinds striving to be heard over all the brasses; then they suddenly surprised everyone when they started to play a slow languorous piece entitled "Dream of Love," a popular 1926 dance tune, which is hardly circus music, with the calliope dragging it out in all melancholy.

The side show was managed by George Ringlin and it featured the following oddities: Fat Lady, Fat Boy, Tallest Man, Tattooed Man, Sword Swallower, Doll Lady, Fire Eater, Fortune Teller, Physical Culture Man, Snake Charmer, and Hawaiian Minstrels as the last act. One of the biggest days

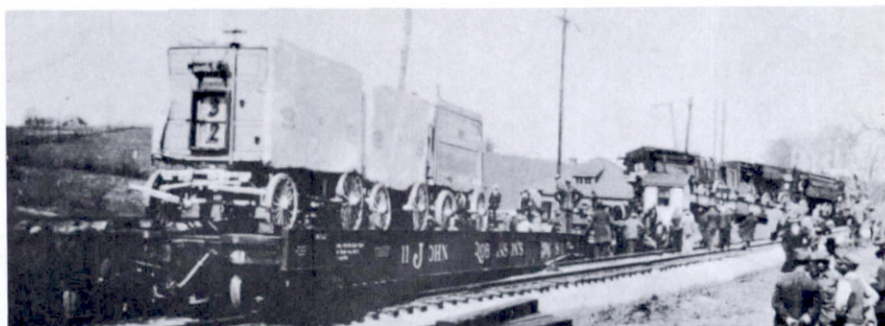
of the season for the side show was at Atlanta, Georgia, where they grossed \$950.

The Robinson Circus' menagerie was an exceptionally good one, and it carried the following lineup of animals: 10 elephants, 9 camels, 1 hippo, 2 water buffalos, 18 tigers, 12 lions, 2 leopards, 2 polar bears, and 2 giraffes (both of which died during the season and which were valued at \$5,251.09 each). Also listed in the menagerie were kangaroos, zebras, monkeys, and other rare species, including, according to a rumor, two rare Malayan Tapirs, but this is unconfirmed.

When the John Robinson Circus left Louisville, Kentucky, and was enroute to Lexington, on April 26, tragedy again struck the show for the second time in less than a week. This time it was a train derailment at Bloomfield Jct., which was located on the Louisville & Nashville Railroad at Shelbyville. The following series of photographs (No.'s 4 through 7) were taken by Louis Collins, an assistant electrician on the circus who told me that there were two conflicting stories as to the cause of the accident. The Robinson Circus' version appeared in the *Shelbyville Sentinel* of April 27, claiming the railroad split a switch and caused the accident (Photo No. 8). The L & N Railroad's version appeared in the Lexington newspaper stating that the accident was caused by a broken journal box.

When I went to Shelbyville to check if this was the correct site of the accident, I was fortunate to locate the railroad conductor who had been assigned to the Robinson train and who had retired. We discussed this accident and what caused it. It is possible that either version could have been correct, but it did seem strange that the journal box should fail over a switch, especially when these flat cars were new. The final result was that the railroad won the case.

During my interview with the con-



7. This car stayed on the main line towards Lexington, as scheduled.

ductor, he recalled that several cage wagons were knocked off of the flat cars. Photo No. 7 shows several missing wagons.

This accident forced the cancellation of Lexington, and the show train continued on to Maysville, with several flats left behind for repairs. These cars arrived late at Maysville, delaying the matinee. So the Robinson Circus was off to a bad start for the season.

When the circus finished up this part of the Kentucky tour, it headed east through Ohio, Pennsylvania, and into New York State. At Jamestown, New York, a circus clown named James Fenton was mortally injured when he fell from a wagon while returning to the cars that night. The show then headed towards Canada; but a week before this tour started, the rains returned to plague the show. These rains started in the middle of May and continued through the middle of June.

The show entered Canada at Montreal, Quebec, on May 23 for its only two-day stand of the season, arriving late due to the heavy rains and mud the day before at Plattsburg, New York, and again causing a late matinee. The

9. Mabel Stark, the 1928 feature, working one of her cats. Robert Good Collection.



second day, three shows were scheduled, one being a special morning show which was poorly attended due to the weather. The two-day stand's profits were only \$2,000. The next scheduled date was to be St. Hyacinthe, Quebec; but that was cancelled because the lot was under water. So they continued on to Sherbrooke, with the rains still falling and causing soft lots for the remainder of the Canadian tour.

At Fredericton, New Brunswick, the newspaper reported that the lot was so soft, it took as many as 36 horses using hook lines to move some of the wagons around the lot. Many of the wagons went down to the axles, and it took the horses and elephants together to get them out. The show finally left town at 3:00 a.m. for St. Stephens, New Brunswick, the last stop on the Canadian tour; and these same conditions were repeated, except that they didn't leave town until 6:00 a.m., heading for Bangor, Maine, and arriving there at 2:00 p.m., thus forcing the cancellation of the matinee performance.

The tour through Canada this year was a financial failure, due mainly to weather; and the show lost \$3,800 in the venture.

In Bangor, Maine, during the evening performance, Mable Stark was attacked and badly mauled by two of her tigers, Zoo and Shiek. In addition, she suffered a leg fracture. There are detailed written accounts about this in her book, *Hold That Tiger*, by Gertrude Orr and Mable Stark, and another article in the January 5, 1929, issue of *Liberty Magazine*. Terrell Jacobs is given credit for saving her life when he came to her rescue and managed to drive the cats back into their cages. Robert Thornton, Equestrian Director, was also in the arena to help Miss Stark to her feet and get her out. She was rushed to Eastern Maine General Hospital where she was admitted and treated by Dr. Harrison L. Robinson. She was released about July 12 and returned to the show at Columbus, Ohio, on July 15. Her hospital bill cost the show \$588 for seven weeks of confinement plus doctors' bills.

The tigers involved in the fight were sold to the Little Rock, Arkansas, Zoo, for \$1,000, as the circus thought they would be too dangerous once they had tasted human blood. The Robinson Cir-



8. Site of the derailment as it appeared in November 1969. Note only minor changes in the topography. Author's photo.

cus purchased two other tigers from the Hagenbeck-Wallace show for \$3,500 to replace them.

When the tour of the New England States was completed, the show headed west, returning through New York State and into northern Pennsylvania. In Oil City, Pennsylvania, the show made the headlines of the local newspaper when two lions were accidentally released too soon from their cages to go into the arena. They found the gate still barred, so they turned around and rushed back towards their cages. The pins holding the runway broke loose and the lions escaped, but they were quickly rounded up. All the other animal acts were cancelled for the performance as the animals were too excited to work. It was also in Oil City that their female giraffe, Mary, died due to illness.

The show continued west, playing through northern Ohio and into Michigan. In Detroit, they played their only Sunday date of the season. Business wasn't very good as they were meeting stiff opposition from the National Air Races and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus which were heavily billed for Detroit. For the remainder of the Michigan tour, the show just broke even.

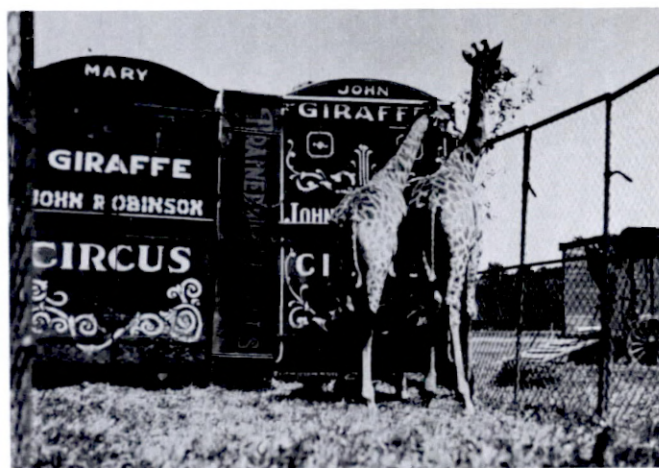
After the Michigan dates, they headed south through Indiana and into Ohio where business began to pick up. As mentioned before, Mable Stark rejoined the show in Columbus; but it is not known when she started to work again. At Piqua, the attendance was only fair as the Gentry Bros. Circus was in town on April 30, having left with all of the happy money, and leaving the towners still suspicious about anything circus. The following day in Dayton, business was good considering that the Sells-Floto Circus and the 101 Ranch had already been there. While in Dayton,

an Indian woman was struck and killed by an automobile while returning to the train. At the next day's stand in Wilmington, according to the newspaper, tom-toms were beating a mournful beat; the Indians were quite angry over the incident and were ready to go back to Dayton. Instead, however, they finished their Ohio tour in several days and crossed over the Ohio River at Beckley, West Virginia, to begin the reopening of their southern tour. It was at Beckley that their remaining giraffe, John, died. Throughout their eight-day tour of West Virginia, they encountered only fair business.

On July 31, the show entered the State of Virginia; and for the month of August, they wound their way back and forth through the states of Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama. The first week in August, Virginia provided the show with only a fair business at the box office. However, when they got to Norfolk, they acquired a gorilla to help promote the circus. It was named "Goo Goo" after a popular Norfolk police officer, "Goo Goo Padden," who was well known to show people around the country.

The John Robinson Circus advertised they purchased this gorilla from the Chapman Zoological Gardens of London, England, for the purchase price of between \$15,000 and \$25,000, depending upon which town they were in. Actually, this so-called gorilla was an orangutan; and, according to the show's ledgers, the cost was only \$673.23. This animal later died in winterquarters in December 1928. I do not know if this animal was displayed in the menagerie, the side show, or a separate pit show.

When the circus headed west into the western part of North Carolina, they were forced to cancel Winston-Salem, August 12, due to heavy rains over the four previous days and two inches on show day. An entry in the ledger for Winston-Salem stated there was a loan repayment of \$15,000 divided among J. Mugivan, B. Bowers, E. Ballard, Z.



10. Giraffes with the Robinson show in 1928. Atwell photo from the Circus World Museum.

Terrell, and C. Odom. There was also another loan repayment of \$13,000 that was made to the American Circus Corporation several weeks later. Business was good the next day in Asheville, and throughout the remainder of the week, despite the fact that rains caused late arrivals and muddy lots. They were forced to cancel two successive matinees — Bristol, Virginia, on August 16, and Kingsport, Tennessee, on August 17. In Johnson City, Tennessee, despite the rain, they had a good day's business, much of which was brought about by the members of a "Fifty Year Club" who were in attendance.

This Fifty Year Club, probably better known today as the "Golden Age Club," was one of the promotions used during the season, and was reportedly first organized in Bluefield, West Virginia, in 1927. Several chapters appeared that year, and many more (mostly in the southern states) in 1928. These chapters were sponsored by the local newspapers who purchased the tickets and gave them to the people free. To receive these tickets, the newspapers placed a coupon in the paper explaining the rules — a person had to have seen the John Robinson Circus fifty or more years before, and explain what incident he called the most. These rules must have been very lenient as most of the replies mentioned elephants in parade, a bareback rider, or a singing clown named John Lowlow. One member stated he first saw the circus in 1856; another mentioned he had missed only one show in 55 years, which was a remarkable record. These turnouts were quite popular in several cities and there were as many as 200 or more guests in attendance.

After the Knoxville, Tennessee, date of August 19, the rain ceased for about two weeks. However, at Decatur, Alabama, on August 31, where they had a good matinee, they were forced to

cancel the night performance due to a very bad storm. The next day's stand, Huntsville, was also cancelled; and the show went on to Atlanta, Georgia. For nine straight days, this unusual weather continued. Atlanta turned out to be one of their biggest days of the year; despite a drizzling rain, they grossed \$14,284, and the side show took in \$451. Their expenses were only \$4,700 for the day. They continued to tour Georgia for a week; and when leaving Albany, on September 6, a flat car was derailed, causing a four-hour delay. This was their second train derailment of the season.

During the season, sickness and accidents were constantly occurring with workingmen and performers continually getting hurt in one way or another. It was getting so bad that in one of his letters to Mr. Mugivan (these letters now being located at the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin), Louis Chase mentioned the fact that some of the women on the show were starting to form a Ladies' Aid Society to help the injured and sick. At times during the season, some of the local people could not help getting into the act, as some of them ran their automobiles into the wagons or animals on their way back to the train on some of those dark and dreary nights. One drunk even drove his car into the train's runs and ended up the evening by getting a job on the circus. This is getting a job the hard way!

After a few dates in South Carolina, the show re-entered North Carolina, running head-on with the Sparks Circus at Raleigh. Sparks played on the same lot that the Robinson Circus played just the day before. One thing the Sparks Circus had going for them that year was their parade. The John Robinson Circus had none, and this brought about a few complaints in the local newspapers. For example, at Hickory, one reporter wrote a strong one-half-column story bitterly attacking circuses in general about their idea of abandoning the parade. He felt it was a part of the "American Institution" to gather the performers and parade them past the gaping thousands. He further stated, "Do away with the parade? Better rob the world of its childhood." Considering that Raleigh had two circuses in two days, both shows did pretty well according to the papers. One newspaper said the Robinson Show had the best performance, but Sparks had the parade.

After several days of good business, the Robinson Show arrived at Goldsboro, on September 18, when more excitement was unexpectedly encountered. While they were backing the train into the siding, several of the coaches started to sway. Some of the performers were seen abandoning the coaches in their night clothes. The end result was the derailment of two coaches—

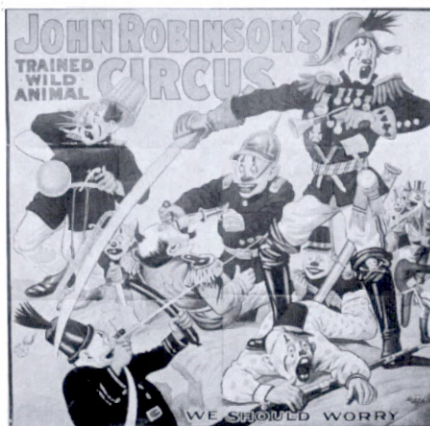


their third train derailment of the year. In another one of Mr. Chase's letters to the home office in Peru, Indiana, he mentioned that the railroad tracks were in bad shape due to all the rain.



11. John Robinson's Band, Wade Zumwalt, Director 1925 through 1930.

This latest storm had started the day before in Durham, North Carolina, September 17; and it intensified as a hurricane came inland off the Atlantic Ocean. The show attempted to put up the tent in Goldsboro; but it had to cancel this date due to the heavy rains and mud. The following morning, Sep-



tember 19, found the show still stranded in Goldsboro, due to flooding at its next location, New Bern, and the stand at Washington, September 20, was switched to Rocky Mount. Despite the fact they wildecatted this date, they made money. To tell the people at the last minute of their coming, advertisements were placed in the newspapers and they hired an airplane to tow a banner.

Meanwhile, the John Robinson Circus was experiencing some labor trouble. Several incidents were noted in some of Mr. Chase's letters to Mr. Mugivan. For example, a workingman tried to attach the circus at New Bern by filing a claim against it with the local Justice of the Peace. The exact reasons are not known, but the matter was straightened out. Also, some of the acts were dissatisfied with conditions in general and

left. A few remained because of their contracts.

There was even trouble with the band when they were docked a day's pay (along with the other show personnel) for the cancellation at Huntsville, Alabama. The band members complained that this was in direct violation of their contract as their union would allow only six days to be cancelled in any one season, and this was the seventh. The show's manager claimed that the opening date at West Baden was rescheduled to Louisville, and, therefore, the Huntsville cancellation would be only the fourth. The band took it up with their union, with these results also unknown.

The circus moved on to Greenville, North Carolina. Because of all the rain they had had over the past week, they had to carry the show on and off the lot since it was too soft for the wagons. The weather finally broke for the remaining six weeks of the season.

In another of Mr. Chase's letters to Mr. Mugivan, he mentioned the fact that the wagons were getting in sad shape because of all the bad weather. The wheels were crumbling, the floors

on the wagons were so warped that they were off of the sills, the bars in the cages were rusting so badly that they were ready to fall out, etc. Probably the most understatement of the year was made by Mr. Chase to Mr. Mugivan in one of his letters when he wrote, "This has been a very trying season" — which, indeed, it must have been!

They finished up the season by traveling through Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, closing the season at Koscuisko, Mississippi, on November 1. From here they made their home run to Peru, arriving on November 3. The total mileage or the season was 15,047 miles.

The final analysis of the season showed the John Robinson Circus out for 196 days, of which there were 68 days of rain. Nine dates were cancelled, eight due to bad weather, plus four additional performances. There were 19 late arrivals over the season.

Considering all of the deplorable conditions which were encountered for the season, the show did realize some profits. According to their ledger, when they arrived at Peru, they had a balance of \$52,477.59.

The other two circuses of the Ameri-

can Circus Corporation (Hagenbeck-Wallace and Sells-Floto) did better. To show a comparison of the three Corporation circuses for the 1928 season, the following figures were obtained from the ledgers of the three shows on their closing dates:

John Robinson, Nov. 1, 1928, Koscuisko, Miss., \$73,678.58.

Hagenbeck-Wallace, Oct. 29, 1928, Shreveport, La., \$89,344.06.

Sells-Floto, Nov. 5, 1928, Monroe, La., \$237,266.88.

In a conversation with Joe McKennon, who was a Master Car Builder for the American Circus Corporation in 1928, he told me that shortly before the John Robinson Circus closed for the season and returned to Peru, they had to lay some additional trackage at the car barns to accommodate extra cars that the Robinson Circus was bringing in with them. In the Spring of 1928, two shows left Peru, now there were to be three shows wintering there in the Winter of 1928-29.

The December 15, 1928, issue of *The Billboard* stated that Louis B. Chase was named the General Manager of the Peru Winterquarters after one year of

managing the John Robinson Circus. He was replaced by Jess Adkins who took over for the 1929 season.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people who aided me in this project, for without their help, this would have been more difficult:

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JOHN ROBINSON'S OFFICIAL ROUTE--1928

Date	City	State	Railroad	Ms.	Date	City	State	Railroad	Ms.	Date	City	State	Railroad	Ms.
ROUTE PRIOR TO FIRST WEEK					TENTH WEEK					TWENTIETH WEEK				
April 21	West Baden	Ind.	Winterquarters		June 25	Buffalo	N. Y.	NKP	88	Sept. 3	Atlanta	Ga.	NC&St.L.	265
FIRST WEEK					June 26	Ashabula	Ohio	NYC	127	Sept. 4	Griffin	Ga.	Sou	46
April 23	Evansville	Ind.	Sou.	81	June 27	Cleveland	Ohio	NYC	54	Sept. 5	Columbus	Ga.	Sou	89
April 24	Owensboro	Ky.	LH&St.L.	43	June 28	Lorain	Ohio	NYC-NKP	27	Sept. 6	Albany	Ga.	CofG	99
April 25	Louisville	Ky.	LH&St.L.	114	June 29	Lima	Ohio	NKP	116	Sept. 7	Valdosta	Ga.	ACL	109
April 26	Lexington	Ky.	L&N	98	June 30	Findlay	Mich.	NKP	31	Sept. 8	Waycross	Ga.	ACL	61
April 27	Mayville	Ky.	L&N	98	July (Sun)	Detroit	Mich.	N.Y.C.-Det.-Ter	102	TWENTY-FIRST WEEK				
April 28	Newport	Ky.	C&O	62	July 1	E. Warren & Conners St.				Sept. 10	Charleston	S. C.	ACL	206
SECOND WEEK					July 2	Owosso	Mich.	DT-GT	78	Sept. 11	Florence	S. C.	ACL	191
April 30	Zanesville	Ohio	L&N-Penna	169	July 3	Cadillac	Mich.	AA	129	Sept. 12	Wilmington	N. C.	ACL	110
May 1	Steubenville	Ohio	Penna	109	July 4	Petosky	Mich.	Penna	98	Sept. 13	Wilson	N. C.	ACL	109
May 2	Washington	Pa.	Penna	58	July 5	Traverse City	Mich.	Penna	98	Sept. 14	Raleigh	N. C.	NS	59
May 3	Greensburg	Pa.	Penna	63	July 6	Manistee	Mich.	PM	119	Sept. 15	Burlington	N. C.	Sou	68
May 4	Indiana	Pa.	Penna	39	July 7	Ludington	Mich.	PM	43	TWENTY-SECOND WEEK				
May 5	Johnstown	Pa.	Penna	41	TWELFTH WEEK					Sept. 17	Durham	N. C.	Sou	21
THIRD WEEK					July 9	Grand Rapids	Mich.	PM	104	Sept. 18	Goldboro	N. C.	Sou	71
May 7	Williamsport	Pa.	Penna	139	July 10	Kalamazoo	Mich.	Penna	49	Sept. 19	New Bern	N. C.	NS	59
May 8	Pottsville	Pa.	Rdc.	115	July 11	Portland	Ind.	Penna	142	Sept. 20	Washington	D.C.	NS	35
May 9	Reading	Pa.	Rdc.	36	July 12	Monroe	Ind.	NKP	28	Sept. 21	Greenville	S. C.	NS	52
May 10	Allentown	Pa.	Rdc.	25	July 13	Huntington	Ind.	NKP-Wab	90	Sept. 22	Roanoke Ra's	N. C.	ACL-SAL	71
May 11	Phillipsburg	N. J.	CNJ	18	July 14	Marion	Ohio	Erie	127	TWENTY-THIRD WEEK				
May 12	Wilkes-Barre	Pa.	CNJ	101	July 16	Columbus	Ohio	HV	46	Sept. 24	Henderson	N. C.	SAL	56
FOURTH WEEK					July 17	Piqua	Ohio	Penn	73	Sept. 25	Sanford	N. C.	SAL	86
May 14	Elmira	N. Y.	L. V.	134	July 18	Dayton	Ohio	B&O	28	Sept. 26	Payetteville	N. C.	ACL	36
May 15	Olean	N. Y.	Erie	122	July 19	Wilmington	Ohio	B&O	65	Sept. 27	Rockingham	N. C.	ACL	99
May 16	Jamestown	N. Y.	Erie	52	July 20	Chillicothe	Ohio	B&O	65	Sept. 28	Columbia	S. C.	SAL	115
May 17	Hornell	N. Y.	Erie	115	July 21	Portsmouth	Ohio	B&O	86	Sept. 29	Spartanburg	S. C.	Sou	94
May 18	Binghamton	N. Y.	Erie	117	FOURTEENTH WEEK					TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK				
May 19	Utica	N. Y.	DL&W	95	July 23	Beckley	W. Va.	N&W-C&O	191	Oct. 1	Sallsbury	N. C.	Sou	119
FIFTH WEEK					July 24	Charleston	W. Va.	C&O	82	Oct. 2	Albemarle	N. C.	Yadkin	31
May 21	Schenectady	N. Y.	NYC	77	July 25	Locon	W. Va.	C&O	53	Oct. 3	Ridgely	N. C.	YK-Sou	105
May 22	Plattsburg	N. Y.	D&H	150	July 26	Huntington	W. Va.	C&O	74	Oct. 4	Statesville	N. C.	Sou	99
May 23	Montreal	Que. Can.	D&H-CNR	83	July 27	Ashland	Ky.	C&O	17	Oct. 5	Hickory	N. C.	Sou	32
May 24	Montreal	Que. Can.	D&H-CNR	83	July 28	Williamson	W. Va.	C&O-N&W	82	Oct. 6	Shelby	N. C.	Sou	97
May 25	St. Hyacinthe	Que.	CNR	36	FIFTEENTH WEEK					TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK				
May 26	Sherbrooke	Que.	CNR	66	July 30	Bluefield	W. Va.	N&W	101	Oct. 8	Greenville	S. C.	Sou	75
SIXTH WEEK					Aug. 1	Rossmore	Va.	N&W	101	Oct. 9	Greenwood	S. C.	Sou	69
May 28	St. John	N. B.	CPR	375	Aug. 2	Stanton	Va.	N&W-C&O	101	Oct. 10	Anderson	S. C.	C&WC	84
May 29	Frederickton	N. B.	CPR	67	Aug. 3	Charlottesville	Va.	C&O	39	Oct. 11	Augusta	Ga.	C&WC	96
May 30	St. Stephens	N. B.	CPR	95	Aug. 4	Newsp News	Va.	RF&P-S&C&O	75	Oct. 12	Athens	Ga.	Ga	116
May 31	Bangor	Me.	ME.CEN	124	Aug. 6	Norfolk	Va.	C&O-Fy-N&W	15	Oct. 13	Gainesville	Ga.	Sou	58
June 1	Lewiston	Me.	ME. CFN.	103	Aug. 7	Petersburg	Va.	N&W	82	TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK				
June 2	Augusta	Me.	ME.CEN	68	Aug. 8	Lynchburg	Va.	N&W	173	Oct. 15	Anniston	Ala.	Sou	155
SEVENTH WEEK					Aug. 9	Greensboro	N. C.	Southern	103	Oct. 16	Selma	Ala.	Sou	131
June 4	Portland	Me.	ME.CEN	60	Aug. 10	Charlotte	N. C.	Southern	94	Oct. 17	Montgomery	Ala.	WofA	59
June 5	Haverhill	Mass.	B&M	82	Aug. 11	Winston-Salem	N. C.	C&X	87	Oct. 18	Troy	Ala.	ACL	55
June 6	Waltham	Mass.	B&M	44	SEVENTEENTH WEEK					Oct. 19	Andalusia	Ala.	CofG	53
June 7	Nashua	N. H.	B&M	49	Aug. 13	Asheville	N. C.	Southern	170	Oct. 20	Pennacola	Fla.	L&N	114
June 8	Concord	N. H.	B&M	24	Aug. 14	Morrisville	Tenn.	Southern	87	TWENTY-SEVENTH WEEK				
June 9	Keene	N. H.	B&M	59	Aug. 15	Pigeon Gap	Tenn.	Southern	66	Oct. 22	Demopolis	Ala.	Frisco	187
EIGHTH WEEK					Aug. 16	Bristol	Tenn.	Southern	42	Oct. 23	Aberdeen	Miss.	Frisco	197
June 11	Montpelier	Vt.	B&M-CV	128	Aug. 17	Kingsport	Tenn.	Southern	27	Oct. 24	New Albany	Miss.	Frisco	62
June 12	Burlington	Vt.	CV-Rut	113	Aug. 18	Johnson City	Tenn.	Cf'd		Oct. 25	Columbus	Miss.	Frisco	86
June 13	Rutland	Vt.	Rut.	48	EIGHTEENTH WEEK					Oct. 26	Greenwood	Miss.	C&G	113
June 14	Glen Falls	N. Y.	D&H	52	Aug. 20	Knoxville	Tenn.	Southern	106	Oct. 27	Greenville	Miss.	C&G	53
June 15	Green Island	N. Y.	D&H	45	Aug. 21	Chattanooga	Tenn.	Southern	111	TWENTY-EIGHTH WEEK				
June 16	Gloversville	N. Y.	NYC-F&G	59	Aug. 22	Nashville	Tenn.	NC&St.L.	122	Oct. 29	Chickasaw	Miss.	IC	75
NINTH WEEK					Aug. 23	Row's Green	Ky.	L&N	73	Oct. 30	Lexington	Miss.	IC	97
June 18	Oneonta	N. Y.	F&G NYC D&H	106	Aug. 24	Madisonville	Ky.	L&N	109	Nov. 1	Yazoo City	Miss.	IC	40
June 19	Seranton	Pa.	D&H	111	Aug. 25	Paducah	Ky.	L&N&Ill Cent	84	Season Ends, Home Run to Peru, Indiana,				
June 20	Corning	N. Y.	DL&W	131	Aug. 27	Memphis	Tenn.	IC	148	Kosciusko to Tolono, Ill. via I. C.				567
June 21	Bradford	Pa.	NYC-Erie	128	Aug. 28	Jackson	Tenn.	NC&St.L.	85	Tolono to Peru, Ind., via Wabash				136
June 22	Oil City	Pa.	Erie	156	Aug. 29	Corinth	Miss.	IC	59	Total Miles on Home Run				791
June 23	Erie	Pa.	Penna	81	Aug. 30	Shelby	Ala.	Sou	56	Total Season Mileage				15,107
June 24					Sept. 1	Huntsville	Ala.	Sou	25					

Circus Monarchs

The Ringling Brothers

By Sverre O. and Faye O. Braathen

Early in 1852 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a German harness maker, August Rüngeling, married Salomé Juliar of Alsatian stock. Within the next quarter century nine sons and two daughters were born to them, two of the boys and one of the girls dying in infancy. Mr. Rüngeling seems to have been an expert workman, winning prizes on various occasions for the harnesses he exhibited at fairs, but he was not an astute business man. He found it necessary to move from Milwaukee to Baraboo, then for some years to McGregor, Iowa, back to Wisconsin to live for a time in Prairie du Chien, and after a brief sojourn in Stillwater, Minnesota, Wisconsin, again called and the family made their home in Rice Lake only to eventually return to Baraboo. Somewhere along the way the family name was changed to Ringling—some say by five of their sons who had hearkened to the circus siren and there learned the value of euphemism and thought that Rüngeling lacked the ring of Ringling.

Papa and Mama Ringling's first child, Albert, was born in Chicago in December, 1852. August arrived in Milwaukee in 1854, Otto in Baraboo in 1858, and in McGregor, Iowa came Alfred in 1862, Charles in 1864, John in 1866, and Henry in 1869. In 1874 in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, these seven sons were to welcome a baby sister, Ida. The children lived normal, active lives in an atmosphere of thrift and sobriety. McGregor and Prairie du Chien, were at that time bustling river ports, considerably more cosmopolitan in outlook than were the inland villages.

It was the era of river traffic, and the echo of the whistles of steamboats as they plied up and down the Mississippi was a familiar sound. The whistles of one family of these steamboats differed from all the rest and brought to the ears of eager children and their entertainment-hungry elders sweet music. Nor was the imputing of music to these entirely fanciful, for the river showboats used a set of chromatic whistles that utilized steam from the boiler. As a showboat approached a wharf from these whistles issued softly muted musical notes which were further softened by being wafted across water.

In the spring of 1870 the busy town of McGregor was visited by the advertising "crew" of the showboat of the famous clown, Dan Rice. The walls and

store windows of the town were decorated with posters telling of the coming of Dan's circus. The Ringling boys were no less excited at the prospects of seeing this well known river boat circus than were the other youngsters of McGregor. The prospect of seeing clowns cavort and ponies dance within a circus ring and a big elephant stand on his hind legs or sit on a pedestal so filled them with expectancy that mothers found themselves relieved to have each day pass for the fourteen or fifteen they must wait for the arrival of this wonder of wonders.

The Dan Rice Circus, like every other then on tour in our country, was a

This program was used by the Ringling Concer. Co. in 1883, the year before their first circus. Pfening Collection.

Ringling Bros. Classic and Comic Concert Co.

TONIGHT

Ringling Bros. Grand Carnival of Fun

FUN! FUN! FUN!

THE FUNNIEST and MOST REFINED
SHOW PARTY ON THE ROAD

A Show For The Rich, A Show For The Poor, A Show For The Old, A Show For The Young,
A Show For Everybody.
Note Our Excellent Program For Tonight And Observe
We Carry It Out To The Letter.

PROGRAM

Overture—Sax Solo.	Violin	Charles Ringling.
Organ	Al. T. Ringling.	
Next We Have A Real Live Dude, In Dutch Delineation.	Songs & Sayings	J. Ringling.
Just A Few Minutes with America's Cornet Virtuoso, Rendering Levy's and	Arbuckle's Difficult Solos.	Al. T. Ringling.
Then Comes The Great Plate Spinner,	Gravity Defying, Manipulator And Balancer.	Albert Ringling.
Following This Charles Ringling Will Introduce His Motto And Tropical Songs.		
After This We Will Present Our Roaring Comedy Play Entitled—	(Ki-Ko-Kan-Kum)	
Cast of Characters.		
Put Muller, A Bad Man	John Ringling.	
Mr. George Myers, A Property Owner	Chas. Ringling.	
Prof. Kinsley, A Purchaser	Al. T. Ringling.	
Tom Sands, With An Eye To Business	Al. Ringling.	
Sheriff	Otto Ringling.	
Minstrel Overture	Chas. And Al. T. Ringling.	
Then We Will Have Fifteen Minutes In Ireland, Songs, Dances, Funny Sayings, Irish Wittricks	Exc. By John Ringling, The Funny Irish Comedian of the Period. Everybody Prepare To Laugh. He	
Will Introduce His Original Parody Version of (Over The Garden Wall).		
Then Comes The Great Innovator, Juggler And Balancer, In His Very Funny Dutch Man-	euvers, Creating Roars Of Laughter With Every Move And Expression. You Laugh As You Have never	
Laughed Before. John Will Introduce Dutch Songs, Poitions, Jokes, and Sayings, Hidy-Didy	Fans And His Roaring Song & Dance In Big Wooden Shoes.	
And Now Comes A Delightful And Pleading Musical Act by Al. T. Ringling and Charles Ringling.	Playing On Twelve Different Musical Instruments, To The Great Delight Of The Audience.	
And Last But Not Least Our Fanny After Piece Intitled	Room 35. Or Trouble In A Hotel	
Cast of Characters		
Ferdinand Kline, A Dutchman In Search Of Lodging	John Ringling.	
Pat O'Rourke, An Irishman Wanting A Days Board	Al. T. Ringling.	
Dew Drop Snowflake, A Base Drum Soloist	Otto Ringling.	
Mr. White, A Boarder With A Headache	Al. Ringling.	
Mr. Gordon, A Tourist Landlord	Chas. Ringling.	
Good Night.		
Doors Open At Seven O'clock. Fun Begins At 8 O'Clock Sharp		

Performance at The Opera House, Ironston, Wisconsin, Mon. Aug. 20th. 1883.

one-ring affair with a limited personnel but it presented a very good performance. The Ringling brothers who attended the show ranged in age from four to eighteen, and to Al's eyes it may have been less glamour-laden than to little brother John's, but to each of them it brought sights, sounds and smells from a world vastly different than their own. In fact, it is a matter of history that the Dan Rice Circus seen in McGregor, Iowa that May day in 1870 left an indelible impression on at least the older of the Ringling boys and imparted to them a vision they were to struggle long years to make a reality. Later that same summer they gave the first substance to their dream by erecting a tent of cast off canvas and quilts, making a crude ring, and with the aid of a few other town lads putting on a "performance." They charged an admission of one cent, and after several shows had about ten dollars which they used to buy muslin to make a better tent.

That winter the boys spent such free time as they could find from school work and chores allotted to them by wise parents in practicing for a "bigger and better" circus they planned to give the following "season." They built props, rigged up "costumes," painted an old wagon to be used in the parade, and practiced faithfully on bugle and drums. For this show the munificent sum of five cents was charged and something like 100 of their friends and neighbors paid the price of admission, perhaps in deference to hard working, honest August Rüngeling, perhaps in genuine sympathy with the determination and resourcefulness exhibited by his sons, and perhaps in part because of their own hunger for amusement. The spectators may have forgotten this circus in due time, but five Ringling brothers never forgot it. For them it remained the first step in the building of the greatest circus empire the world has ever seen.

Arrived at his majority, Al Ringling left the home roof to seek opportunities to further the dream of a circus which he had never relinquished. He had learned the carriage trimming trade and practiced this enough to assure himself of a roof over his head, food and clothing, but he never passed up a chance to put on his juggling and tight rope walking acts, usually with one of the

"hall shows" that toured the mid-west at that time.

Otto, Alfred (who came to be known as Alf T.) and Charles learned the art of harnesses and saddle making and earned their keep in this manner but they, too, dreamed of the day they might escape into the amusement world. They practiced on a number of instruments and became proficient musicians.

By 1876 the family were back in Baraboo, welcomed by the townspeople who did not foresee that five of these Ringling boys were to make the name of that pretty city known far and wide. By 1881 Al could postpone the realization of his dream no longer. He had carefully hoarded money he had earned and now returned to Baraboo that he might there organize his younger brothers and perhaps a few of their friends into a circus company. After conferring with Otto, Alf. T., Charles and John it was decided that they must first earn enough money to buy the bare essentials in the way of a tent, some animals, and transportation facilities. Their musicianship promised to help them and they organized a little band that played in homes and halls for the dances with which the people of that era kept in neighborly contact with one another through the long winters. The money thus earned went into their "circus" fund.

Al also organized a company he billed a "4-BIG-4" to play hall shows. This quartette was comprised of Ringling, Oliver, Webster and Jeero. Oliver seems to have been the best known of this group, having built quite a reputation as a violinist in Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa. Al Ringling billed his quartette into Elizabeth, Illinois innocent of the fact that his violinist had on some previous occasion transgressed the law in that town. When apprised of this fact Al hurriedly made inquiry and learned of a violinist in the area who was "talented" and "Available." There was no time to change the advance billing, so no doubt a goodly portion of the audience that night had come to hear the "famed" Oliver.

Oliver's substitute arrived at Al's dressing room too late for even a perfunctory rehearsal, but fortified by the man's recommendations Mr. Ringling sent the virtuoso out to play the opening overture. The man declined piano accompaniment, stating frankly that he could not read music and played entirely "by ear." Gray goatee bobbing as he chewed vigorously on a cud of tobacco, his never-pressed pants tucked securely into well worn boots, the Fiddler launched into his opening solo. Soon storms of applause reached Al's dressing room, and he slipped into the wings to listen to his newly found musician. At each scarcely imperceptible pause between numbers the rustics in the hall stomped their feet and

cheered wildly, and the fiddler played on.

When it became apparent to Mr. Ringling that he had engaged Mr. Perpetual Motion, Al sent one of the troupe out to ask the fiddler what it was he was playing, hoping thereby to signal the new musician that it was time for the performance proper to begin. Drawing a bead on a distant cuspidor, Mr. P. Motion hit the bull's eye with a generous allotment of tobacco-laden saliva and without pausing in his fiddling made answer "This hwar be' The Bumble Bee and Pumpkin Blossom Overture." The fiddling continued until Al. could control his merriment and himself sufficiently to go on the stage with the request that the bumble bee be killed so the rest of the troupe might pick the "pumkin" blossom and proceed with the show.



John Ringling, Emperor of Dutch Comedians, is shown as he appeared in the early 1880s with the concert company. Pfening Collection.

Saving every cent they could, by the fall of 1882 the Ringlings found they had sufficient funds to warrant their taking on the road a troupe they chose to call RINGLING BROS. CLASSIC AND COMIC CONCERT COMPANY. They realized that despite some small semi-professional experience they were yet essentially amateurs but they could not have been more proud of their little

company had it been composed of famous artists. They feared, however, that their amateur rank might discourage audience attendance in the Baraboo area so cast about for a community where they would not be known. Limited funds prevented their entertaining any idea of venturing very far abroad and after some debate it was agreed they'd make their initial appearance in Mazomanie, Wisconsin, about twenty-five miles southwest of Baraboo. With little intercourse between these two towns the brothers hoped they would be total strangers and, so, accepted as professionals.

Their amateur status continued to cause them deep concern and for one of the few times in their lives they departed from strict honesty in their advertising. The *Weekly Sickle* of Mazomanie on November 25, 1882 carried the following press notices:

"RINGLING BROS. MONDAY NIGHT"
"Ringling Bros. Classic Concert Co. is a success, (St. Paul Pioneer Press)."

"Dubuque Dailey Times says: 'Every one pleased with Ringling Bros. entertainment at Opera House last evening.'"

"RINGLING BROS. COMPANY"
"Ringling Bros. Classic and Comic Concert Co., who are billed for Schmitz Hall next Monday evening is a first class troupe and have given good satisfaction in our neighboring cities, a few press notices of which appear elsewhere. No lovers of music should fail to attend. Their band and orchestra will appear in uniforms. This company come highly recommended as deserving artists and pleasing people."

On November 26, 1882 Al. Alf. T., and Charles Ringling, Ed Kimball, Will Trinkhouse, Fred Bogardus (sometimes known as Fred Hart) and Elmer Weatherby crowded into a surrey and drove to Sauk City, followed by their props in a farm wagon. There they caught a train to Mazomanie. They went to the hotel for breakfast, eager to impress all who saw them with their importance as the troupe of actors who that evening would entertain the populace in Schmitz Hall, as had been properly advertised by Markey Young, their advance man.

"Well if here aint our old pals, Al and Charlies," came the hearty greeting as a Mazo youth slapped one of them on the back." "Well so it be," echoed a second lad, Turning, the Ringlings recognized two youths with whom they had played with in a band a year or so earlier. Gone was the naive dream of being accepted as professionals by the citizens of Mazomanie! By noon every one in the town would have learned of their true identity. Their high hopes now draped in consternation and concern, the members of the little troupe must have presented an appearance more comic (to others) than classic at that moment. In after years they

admitted that they debated blowing the date and returning to Baraboo. Had they done so it would have violated the Ringling pertinacity, the characteristic that was to see them through worse calamities than this. It was probably Al who rallied their spirits and put them through a strenuous rehearsal to acquaint themselves with the physical aspects of the hall and to give the final polish to the several acts they had so laboriously put together in the days and nights of planning and practicing in Baraboo.

The day dragged on but finally the hour for the raising of the curtain arrived. The boys must have been discouraged if they had watched from the wings to see the hall fill with spectators, and mayhap the show was delayed a bit to accommodate an audience that seemed to be late arriving. Be that as it may, the final count showed only fifty-nine people in the seats for this opening season for the Classic and Comic Concert Company. The total receipts were \$13.00, of which \$6.00 had been paid for the use of the hall. They had paid the livery to drive them and their equipment to Sauk City and for their rail fare to Mazomanie and for their meals at the hotel. There simply were not sufficient funds to get to their next stand, Spring Green, another twelve miles to the west.

August Schmitz, the owner of the hall, sensed the boy's despair and remitted the rent. Perhaps he had learned they were the sons of hard working, honest August Rüngeling, or it may have been the eagerness and earnestness of this troupe of young "professionals" appealed to him. In any event his generosity that night enabled the boys to journey to their next stand. The Ringlings were deeply grateful for the kindness and as long as Mr. Schmitz lived he and his family received complimentary tickets to the Ringling Bros. Circus when it played near Mazomanie. This was the first of many favors shown the Ringlings in those early days of struggle to get established in the circus world. Not one of these many kindnesses was ever taken for granted. The history of the Ringling Show is replete with records of tangible expressions of gratitude for such assistance.

In reviewing that first professional performance of the Ringlings, *The Mazomanie Sickle* wrote on December 2, 1882: "Ringling Bros. gave an entertainment in Schmits' Hall, on Monday evening last. The Feats performed by the senior of the brothers in the rendition of his Japanese juggling was simply marvelous, and Kimball in his impersonations was good and gave that gentleman the credit of possession a large amount of histrionic ability."

If Dame Fate frowned on the Ringling brothers in Mazomanie, she smiled on them in Spring Green. The owner

of the hall there forgot that he had rented it to the Classic and Comic Concert Company and permitted a group of young people to schedule a dance for the same night. The country lads and lassies came in goodly number to the dance and when apprised of the owner's error they good naturedly switched their amusement and attended the Ringling's show, filling the hall to capacity. With \$90.00 in the exchequer, the little troupe went lightheartedly

Two Great Shows Combined

—WILL EXHIBIT AT—

WATERTOWN, TUESDAY, MAY 14th, 1889.



This will be the only consolidation of big shows that will visit Watertown this season, as an arrangement of the American Showman's League will prevent any other big show from coming to Jefferson county this year.

Ringling Bros. & Van Amburgh's

United Monster Circus, Museum and Menagerie, Roman Hippodrome and Universal World's Exposition.

Now beyond a doubt the finest and largest show extant. 25 Beautiful Thoroughbred Horses. 200 Strong Circus Performers in the Great Triple Circus. Stupendous Herd of Ponderous Performing Elephants. Giant Hordes of Camels and Dromedaries. Grand Master of the Nations. Sensational Hippodrome Performances. Royal Troupe of Wondrous Japanese Performers.

BABYLON—Largest Elephant on Earth.
JEWEL—The Wonderful Umbrella-Eared Elephant.
FANNY—The only American-born Elephant.

SPOT—The Lilliputian Elephantine Wonder.
SAMSON—Madagascar's Giant Brute.
Whole Brigades of Brass and Reed Bands. Ancient Egyptian Caravan. The Fearful G and Spotted Man Eater. A Great Double Menagerie. A Fierce of Champion Bare-back Riders. Whole Troupes of Champion Circus Performers.

The Grand Free Gold Glittering Street Parade.

The Largest and most Dazzling Street Demonstration ever Beheld in any Age or Country. More Actual Wealth, Splendor and Glorious Sight than were ever before Witnessed FREE.

It is Worth Going 100 Miles to See.

Two Performances Daily, Afternoon and Evening. Doors Open at 1 and 7 p. m. Ring Performances One Hour Later.

One 50-cent ticket admits to all the Combined Shows. Children under 12 years, half price.

AT WATERTOWN, TUESDAY, MAY 14th.

In 1889 the Ringlings tacked the Van Amburgh name on the title. This newspaper ad announced the stand at Watertown, Wisconsin, the ninth stand of the season for the mud show. Circus World Museum Collection.

on to keep engagements at Boscobel, Prairie du Chien, McGregor and other Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin towns that winter. Dependent as they were on trains and/or liveries to get from town to town in the winter months when the roads were never good at best, and wind swept and snow clogged at their worst, these young men needed every ounce of physical stamina and every atom of perseverance they possessed to continue from day to day, from night to night. There were times when a good sleep seemed to them to

be the *summum bonum* of existence but had to be postponed to some unforeseeable night in the future. They frequently had to exercise all their powers of persuasion to prevail upon reluctant farmers to put horses over terrible roads that the Classic and Comic Concert Company might not disappoint the audience they hoped would be a-waiting them in the next village. They found hotel accommodations in some of these small towns left much to be desired.

The rewards for truly valiant endeavors throughout the first season were realized in the guise of priceless experiences, but there is no record of building a bank account. Al had done much to perfect his juggling. The youngest, John, had joined the Concert Company in Iowa and took on the role of comedian, learning considerable about this art ere spring found the troupe back in Baraboo. They made mental note as to the type of community their various acts and stunts appealed most to their audiences. Surely they must have learned a few ways in which they would refine their methods of packing props and transporting them.

Before they were ready to take to the road again in the fall of 1883 Al availed himself of an opportunity to travel with a more professional troupe, recognizing that he could thereby "learn a few tricks of the trade" and, so, enhance his reputation as a performer and perchance end the season with some money with which to further the realization of his dream of building a circus. This may have been the summer that some of the boys were engaged by one of the most unique circuses ever to travel through the midwest, the Morrison Show of Delavan, Wisconsin. Morrison's interest in circus ownership and management is intriguing. He operated a school of dentistry and discovered that there were not enough people in Delavan willing to intrust their teeth to the amateur efforts of his students. Having established his school in the circus capitol of his country it occurred to him that such an institution might be made to serve as a "charity dental clinic." As his circus toured the countryside, Morrison advertised that anyone buying a ticket to any of the performances was entitled to have his or her teeth extracted by one of the dental school students without cost. Could it have been that a circus performance also served as a substitute for an anesthetic? Be that as it may, it is known that some of the Ringling brothers performed in the Morrison circus arena (not as charity patients) and doubled in brass by playing in the band.

When again they left Baraboo at the head of their own show it was billed as RINGLING BROS. GRAND CARNIVAL OF FUN, the result of their noting the previous season that their audiences were more responsive to fun than to



The cook house of the Ringling show is pictured in 1890 or 1893 at Algona, Iowa. Circus World Museum Collection.

classicism. Maybe they found it more fun to dispense humor than to try to translate highbrow into lowbrow idiom. Their observations during the winter of 1882-83 had also disclosed that the lumberjacks of the north woods were most ready with both money and applause, so September, 1883 found the somewhat augmented troupe playing the lumber camps of Northern Wisconsin. Things went well until winter set in in earnest when they reached Minnesota. There they finally decided to discharge the grumbling "amateurs" of their troupe and go it alone. Al joined them when they reached Nebraska in January, and his presence did much to instill new courage and ambition into all of them. Al's perseverance and his ability to encourage his brothers when sledding got particularly rough was always one of the secrets of the success of their undertakings. The winter of 1884 apparently was a successful one for the concert company since by the spring of 1884 they returned to Baraboo with the tidy sum of \$1,000.00 and a determination to postpone no longer the realization of their circus dream. They also brought to Baraboo that spring a source of inspiration and prestige in the person of aged, white haired, Yankee Robinson.

Robinson had toured with various tent shows prior to the Civil War and had owned his own circus for some years but had not met with much success but rather financial reverses and when Al Ringling met him in 1883, "Yankee" was running one of the little hall shows that spelled amusement for many a village and hamlet in those years when winters were long and rugged and entertainment confined largely to the home made brand. With the dream of circus ownership ever uppermost in Al Ringling's mind, he seized upon the chance to induce the veteran showman, Yankee Robinson to join the Ringling circus.

After ordering a "big show" tent and a smaller one for their side show, they realized their capital was not going to allow them to purchase such things as

center and quarter poles, wardrobe or other items which their own hands and ingenuity could fashion. The vigor of their youth and the aura of their dream made all this seem simple, and they wielded ax and saw, hammer and chisel willingly and tirelessly. Al's bride, and mayhap other members of the distaff side of the Ringling family plied scissors and needles to fashion costumes for John, the clown, Louise, the snake charmer, Al, the juggler, and for the contortionist and the tumblers. When muscles rebelled against cutting and trimming another tamarack pole or building another section of seats, the boys 'rested' by rehearsing their tricks and stunts or their band numbers and jokes. A little less than five weeks after they brought their hall show back to Baraboo, the Ringlings erected their big top and side show tents on what is today the post office in Baraboo.

By the middle 1890s the show boasted a fine menagerie, including a giraffe, as shown in this photo from the Scholl Collection at the Illinois State Normal University. Courtesy of Dick Conover.



There on May 19, 1884 was given the first circus performance by the boys who were to make circus history and completely revolutionize the circus business in the United States of America.

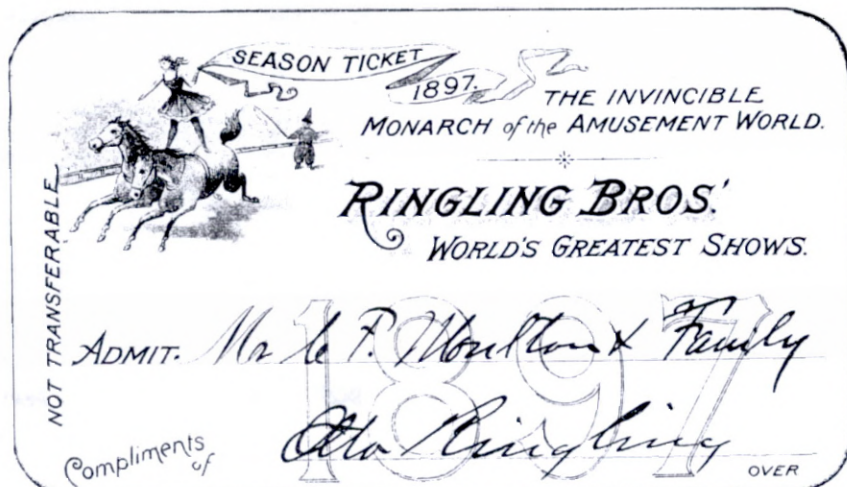
The various enterprises in which the Ringling family had engaged had brought them into contact with hundreds of people in and around Baraboo, and they had become known for their energy and enthusiasm, their uprightness and honesty — attributes that still commanded respect and admiration. Many a surrey and spring wagon made its way to the county seat of Sauk County that warm and balmy May day, each bearing its cargo of eager circus goers. The little parade, with Yankee Robinson of the flowing white hair and beard at its head, so warmed the hearts of many of the spectators that not a few laid down gold coins and told Treasurer Otto to keep the change. The big top seated 600 persons and was well filled that sunny afternoon. Yankee Robinson greeted them as they entered the main tent and helped them to find seats, telling funny stories the while, some a bit moth-eaten but told so fetchingly as to bring a laugh. The old showman had learned many a secret of psychology in his years of tramping and although the twilight of his life was gathering about him he yet was worth the one-half of the receipts of the aftershow concert which the Ringling brothers had promised him.

The next issue of Ford's Sauk County Democrat, May 24, 1884, commented: "The Yankee Robinson and Ringling Bros. show opened the season in this city last Monday. The afternoon's business was heavy, for Baraboo, as it usually does not patronize shows well in the afternoon. In the evening the tent was crowded so that it made it inconvenient for them to perform. The performance was very credible considering the boys had never had any practice and we have not heard a single person find fault. They are proud of their home endorsement and desire us to return thanks to the citizens for their

liberal patronage, and Mr. Al Ringling, one of the head men, says if business continues as good as it commenced he will come back to Baraboo with a big show . . ."

The strenuous five weeks between bringing home their Carnival of Fun and their giving "two full and complete performances" of their circus on that opening day left everyone dogged tired, and the labor of packing their tents and poles, props and costumes, and other equipment proved to be something of an ordeal. By midnight they were on their way, again renting most of the horses and wagons to transport them to their next stand, the same Sauk City from which in November, 1882 they had caught the train to Mazomanie. Making the journey that May night were Al, Otto, Alf. T., Charlie and John Ringling, Will Gunkel, Mlle. Julie Carter, and Madame Blanche. Al was at once equestrian director, performer, and member of the band. Otto contended himself with remaining in the so-called "office wagon" selling tickets, scanning and paying bills and, when business permitted, sending money to the Bank of Baraboo to be credited to the Show's account. Alf. T. directed the band, deserting his post to don wardrobe for one or two numbers in the ring. Charlie played in the big show band, took his turn in the arena, and acted as director of the orchestra for the aftershow concert. John alternated between playing in the band and clowning, the while another of the troupe made a change of costume. Ahead of this Show were Ed. Boyd, press agent and programs, and Samuel McKenzie, bill poster. Their first side show boasted an educated hog, headless rooster, a Circassian lady, and electric lady, a magician, and, of course, a fire king.

The year 1884 proved not to be an auspicious one for circuses nor for business in general. The country witnessed a number of bank failures, including one in which Gen. Grant had an interest. Violent electrical storms and tornadoes ravaged many areas and wreaked havoc



This fancy season pass was signed by Otto Ringling for the 1897 season. Pfening Collection.

on several circuses, including Barnum & Bailey, and other disasters plagued sections of our nation. The YANKEE ROBINSON AND RINGLING BROS. GREAT DOUBLE SHOW, Circus and Caravan escaped most of these but on August 25 their mentor, Yankee Robinson, died unexpectedly at the age of sixty-six and was buried at Jefferson, Iowa. His presence had added color to the performance and prestige to the circus, and his advice and counsel had been both helpful and a source of reassurance and inspiration to the embryo showmen from Baraboo. Their circus finished their initial season with a profit so modest they were compelled to again route their Carnival of Fun through the small hall show towns of the mid-west.

On May 18, 1885, RINGLING BROS. GREAT DOUBLE SHOWS, CIRCUS, CARAVAN, TRAINED ANIMAL EX-

Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows on the lot in the late 1890s, from an original colored glass slide. Woodcock-Pfening Collection.

POSITION opened in their home town, the new title indicating that they now felt that the name of Ringling no longer needed to be reinforced by that of Yankee Robinson.

Each circus season netted them modest profits and each season they enlarged their show to the extent warranted by their bank account. Each winter found them again on the hall circuit until the spring of 1888 they decided the time had come to expand all their energies and talents in building, enlarging, and improving an managing their circus.

The season of 1888 was one of the darkest of their entire career. Shortly after they took to the road they ran into the stiffest competition they had yet encountered — shows put on by the storm gods. For six consecutive weeks wind, rain and hail beset their route. Lots were often quagmires and roads became almost impassable. Every day they had to enlist the help of farmers as their own baggage stock and wagons, though now materially augmented, proved incapable of coping with roads and lots. At the start of this season they had doubled their admission price, confident that the performance warranted charging fifty cents. Late arrivals and flooded lots so reduced the attendance that in near desperation they returned to the twenty-five cent admission fee, but this failed to tempt people to brave the elements and court ruined clothing. With their treasury nearly depleted, the Ringlings appealed to the Bank of Baraboo for a loan of \$1,000.00, tendering any security requested. It is attributed to the reputation they had built thus early in their career that Mr. Van Orden, the president of the bank who was known for his business acumen, did not hesitate to make the loan, and it is no less a tribute to be able to record that the Ringlings returned the \$1,000.00 untouched, as fair weather finally greeted them and business greatly improved.

Again it was the eldest of the broth-

ers who, driven by his dream of a great circus, found powers of persuasion equal to encouraging the younger ones to drive on to the next stand, and next and yet another, reminding them always that mid-West America was not a land of unrelenting rains and that tomorrow or the next day the sun was sure to shine.

In later years many were the complimentary tickets mailed to farmers, livery men, and others who in those sodden weeks of the spring and early summer of 1888 lent a hand to the struggling circus men from Baraboo. Without such help all of Al's powers of persuasion would have been to no avail, and true to tradition they were building the Ringlings never forgot those who helped them.

The winter of 1888-89 was the first the brothers had had an opportunity to give their undivided attention to strengthening the various departments of their circus that they might take on a bigger and better show the following summer. This policy proved to be a wise one, for the summer of 1889 found them grossing a little better than \$1,000.00 on each of two days—as much as they had been able to save during the entire second winter of their hall show. Those two days loomed larger for the Ringlings than did the days when some years later their circus was to gross more than \$50,000 in a single day many times during the course of a season. The \$80,073.75 they had grossed at the end of that happy summer enabled them to give substance to another dream.

That winter the brothers purchased seventeen regulation length railway cars—one workmen's sleeper, one elephant car, one performer's sleeper, one advertising car, five stock and eight flat cars. Their main tent was to measure 100 x 145 feet. They acquired more baggage and parade wagons, baggage and ring stock, menagerie animals, and had more elaborate costumes made. Long hours were spent poring over maps and atlases, for with the circus about to go on rails they must find new territory and play larger cities. They cast their eyes to the east and put cities in Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia on their route for the first time.

As the Ringling Bros. Circus grew larger it found that the storm gods were not its only worries. For many years the American scene had been cursed by men who used circuses chiefly as vehicles for operating various games of chance and who were glad to engage short-change artists as ticket sellers, taking a cut of the extra money thus taken in. Once the Ringling Show was commanding large enough crowds at their side shows and main performance, these gentlemen who preferred to make \$1.00 "under the table" to \$3.00 above

The Lockhart elephants from England and the White Elephant "Keddah," were featured in this herald used in 1897. Pfening Collection.

it descended upon the brothers with offers to rent the "privileges" of running three card money games, shell games, or some other device designed to cheat the unwary circus goer. Others offered amazingly large sums for the privilege of selling the Show's tickets. Without exception the Baraboo circus men turned down these offers, often times having to resort to physical force to dissuade such "followers." It was not always easy to persuade sheriff's forces or police officers to take custody of these gamblers who set up their devices on property immediately adjacent to the circus lot.

Once this undesirable element was convinced that the Ringlings were not to be tempted by any sum of money to permit their nefarious practices to be

conjoined with the circus, the gamblers and short-change boys resorted to despicable publicity designed to drive from the road an amusement organization they may have half foreseen was to eventually make their lot less profitable. Handbills appeared in advance of the Ringling Show designed to discourage attendance at its performances. One such read:

"When Thieves Fall Out Honest Men get their Dues."

Warning!

Neighbors unchain your dogs.

Get out your shotguns.

Keep your children at home.

The Mauraunders are Coming.

Beware of Them.

They Go by the name of Ringling Brothers.

You will know them by their Greasy Appearance.

They look like a Gypsy Camp.

They are Thieves, Liars and Scoundrels.

They have no show worthy of the name.

They sneak from town to town under cover of Darkness.

They plunder and steal even the washing hanging in backyards.

We who give you this warning are also thieves, but we have fallen out with the greasy pack and now tell the truth."

Because this characterization of the Ringling brothers and of their Circus was so patently at variance with what the patrons had seen and known these showmen and their organization, these handbills were quite ineffectual. In several towns along the route, however, the posting of these so riled the residents that the billposters were man-handled rather severely, and the handbills themselves were defaced or torn down. After a time the gamblers growled that the Ringling Circus was "Sunday School" and decided the wisest course was to ignore it. Occasionally some card shark or ticket seller with long fingers would approach one of the brothers with an offer the gambler thought would prove tempting but always left the lot the wiser for their pains and on occasion with pains more tangible in type.

The five brothers continued to live very frugally that the maximum portion of the Show's profits might go to building it ever larger, ever more attractive both in physical appearance and in the calibre of the performance it presented. Early records disclose one or another of the boys receiving fifty cents or a dollar now and then, probably to be spent on such luxuries as cigars or chewing gum. They lived in the winter months in rented flats above stores and shops in Baraboo, and for the first quarter of a century plowed back into the circus business the major portion of the profits derived from it. Characteristically, before any of them built homes for

themselves they built a comfortable home for their parents, as Papa Ringling's wanderings were at an end.

Their first year on rails proved to be very profitable, and that winter they had ample funds with which to realize some of their long deferred plans. Enough equipment was added to require five more railway cars to transport the Show. Once again the Ringling chose to let their public know of these additions and improvements by renaming their circus **RINGLING BROS. WORLD'S GREATEST RAILROAD SHOWS, REAL ROMAN HIPPODROME, 3 RING CIRCUS AND ELEVATED STAGES, MILLIONAIRE MENAGERIE, MUSEUM AND AQUARIUM AND SPECTACULAR TOURNAMENT PRODUCTION OF CAESAR'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO ROME.** If the actuality did not quite fulfill the promise one must remember that since the days of Barnum's Tody Hamilton circuses have been expected to indulge in superlatives in their advertising. If the circus was the first business enterprise to find such advertising profitable they have not lacked for apt students, as witness today's ads for everything from soap to soap operas, from motels to automobiles!

The Baraboo show continued to grow and by 1895 it required no less than forty-four railway cars to transport it along its extended route. That year found them opening their season for the first time not in their home town but in the huge Tattersall building in the metropolis of the mid-West, Chicago. The Barnum & Bailey Circus had long opened in Madison Square Garden in New York City, and James A. Bailey may well have read of that Tattersall opening and pondered the ascendancy of a star in the western circus sky. With their plans to go from Chicago to St. Louis and to later in the season actually invade eastern territory which until then had been considered sacrosanct to the Barnum Show, the Ringlings realized they needed some exceptional attraction. It was to meet this need that they engaged the Liberati Concert band to give center ring concerts before the circus performance began.

This proved to be a master stroke for it brought the show much favorable publicity which was essential if they were to successfully invade Barnum & Bailey territory. A review in the *Boston Herald* was typical. It read: "Passing from the menagerie one enters the big audience tent, seating 10,000 persons. Here, indeed, is a striking novelty in a circus and a great feature of the Ringling Bros. Show. Here is as fine a military band as one would wish to hear, composed of 60 soloists, conducted by Liberati, whose fame as a coronet soloist is well known. This band gives a concert every afternoon and evening before the performance, and it is a great

treat to hear them. No such music has ever been heard with a circus before. Sig. Liberati plays a solo during each concert, and yesterday the audience were especially hearty in their applause." (*Boston Herald*, June 25, 1895)

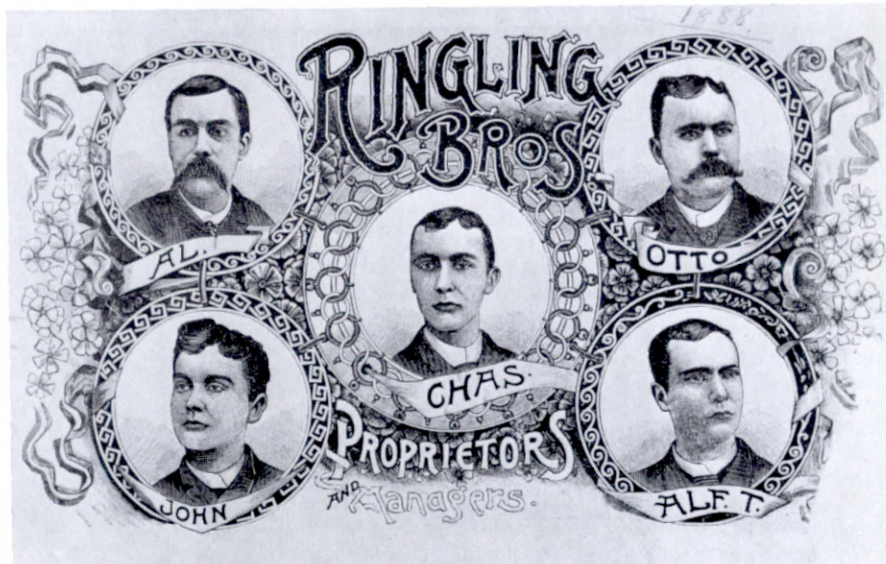
No doubt such reviews and editorials exercised a vital influence in persuading Bailey to buy a half interest in the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show and exerted a similar influence on the Sells Bros. when they were invited to sell a one-half interest in their show to Mr. Barnum's successor. With a substantial interest in these two important circuses, Mr. Bailey hoped to be in a position to more adequately meet the competition afforded by the Wisconsin brothers.

William Cameron Coup and James A. Bailey had been reluctant to mingle freely with the public, preferring to build and direct their circuses from behind the big top. Not so the Ringling Brothers. They welcomed every opportunity to meet their patrons on the lot, and if governors and mayors were among these so much the better. Merchants and traveling men always found in a Ringling a man eager to glean information regarding crops and business conditions and glad to swap a yarn or two. Many a store keeper and "drummer" carried in his pocket a season's pass to the Ringling Bros. Circus and was happy to speak a word of praise for this amusement institution whenever opportunity presented. They differed from Barnum in this matter of publicity. Phineas T. sought the limelight for himself, with his amusement enterprise coming in a poor second. The Ringlings sought to turn the eyes of America on the circus of which they were so proud and for which they had such splendid plans and hopes.

In the conduct of their circus the showmen from Baraboo were very exacting. It was not enough to make sure there were no con men or gamblers

on the front door. They must be equally certain that no pickpockets found an opportunity to play their nefarious trade. At first they relied on their own staff to safeguard the patrons, but as the show grew and the owners responsibilities became ever heavier it was found desirable to hire one of the great detective agencies. The Ringlings issued a set of printed rules to govern every employee from the lowliest to the most glamorous. Any infraction of these rules brought a swift punishment—a fine or dismissal.

One of the first lessons learned by the embryo showmen was the need for organizing their circus into departments. Surely there must have been many times over the years when the brothers were grateful they were five. Too, they must have found times when they were glad to have brothers Gus and Henry to give them yet more eyes, hands and brains with which to cope with the multiplicity of problems and details incident to operating an ever expanding circus. The first years on the road the eldest, Al, was the king pin—conceiving the format of the show, supervising its loading and unloading, arranging and supervising the performance, and counseling constantly with each and every member of the staff. Soon, however, he chose to confine his efforts more and more exclusively to producing and directing the performance and serving as equestrian director. Charles took over the work of outdoor advertising. Otto became the treasurer and proved himself a financial wizard. Alf. T. found his forte in composing the press books, meeting newspaper editors and critics, and in general directing the public relations of the circus. The youngest of the quintet, John, was twenty-four the year the circus was put on rails. He became its official router and railway contractor. It would have been difficult to have assigned to John



a department better suited to his own particular talents. His knowledge of railway rates, mileage, time tables, and of business conditions throughout the nation became fabled. He has never had a peer in this field. The details of winter-quarters planning and building for the next season held no lure for John, but he never wearied of traveling abroad to discover and sign to contracts the best the entire world had to offer in the way of circus performers. Much of the Ringling's success in that part of a circus which attracts the ducat holders was due to the uncanny ability of this talent scout to satisfy the public's taste.

During the 1897 season Mr. Bailey completed plans for taking the big Barnum show to Europe for what became a five year tour. He arranged for the Buffalo Bill Wild West Show to open in Madison Square Garden in the spring of 1898 and for the Forepaugh-Sells Bros. Circus to open there each season from 1899 through 1902. He looked to these two leading shows to hold "his" territory against the rapidly expanding circus from Wisconsin. Just how much the absence from this country of the Giant of American circus men, James A. Bailey, during those five years contributed to the growth of his chief rival is purely speculative. It is historic truth, however, that upon his return to this country he found the western circus a young goliath flexing muscles in gleeful exuberance. In 1893 the Ringlings had adopted the title "World's Greatest Shows." By 1903 they had gone far towards making that title a reality.

Each year after they became a railway show in 1890 the Baraboo brothers had added greatly to their equipment in every department and most especially so for their "grand and glorious" street parades. By the time the Barnum show returned from its triumphal tour of Europe the parades given by the Ringling Circus were replete with masterpieces of the wood carvers and with costumes as resplendent as those that graced the royal courts of the Continent. They had combed the country for magnificent baggage horses, and these were bedecked with superb harnesses and brilliant plumes. High stepping saddle horses bedizened with colorful robes and studded bridles were ridden by beautifully costumed ladies and by men in eye-catching uniforms. Animals from an ever increasing menagerie walked sedately or rode in elaborate cage wagons giving millions of Americans their first glimpse of elephants and camels, leopards and lions, tigers and pumas. Their "Hideous Hyena," that "Mammoth, Marauding, Man-eating Monstrosity" that was their pride in 1885 was long since dead and no longer mourned.

Nor did these rising young showmen



A side show opening with a snake charmer on the bally, is shown early in the 1900s. Pfening Collection.

ignore the performance itself in these years, although it remained subordinate in monetary outlay to the street parade. Programs of those years disclose a variety of acts and spectacles and good artists. These ranged from those that thrilled the audience by their death-defying nature to those that pleased the eye with sheer beauty, the whole interlaced with the antics of a now very creditable clown contingent.

The Ringlings must have found satisfaction in having thus improved in every aspect of their circus, for when the Barnum & Bailey Show returned from Europe it became apparent to all that Mr. Bailey had not permitted the title "The Greatest Show on Earth" to lose luster. He, too, went out in 1903 with parade equipment best described by the word "splendor." His chief acquisition was the Eastern-and-Western Hemisphere Band Wagon, the most elaborate and costly parade wagon ever

The Swan Bandwagon with the big show band is shown in the early 1900s. Ringling Circus Museum Collection.



built. The Ringlings that same year employed the Bode Wagon Company of Cincinnati to build several magnificent tableau wagons to grace their later parades.

Mr. Bailey, perhaps a little intoxicated with his triumphs abroad and certainly overly eager to outdo the circus that had ridden in "from the West," made the mistake of going on the road in 1903 with a show so heavy in seats and equipment as to be beyond the power of his crews of workmen to handle expeditiously enough to move on schedule. This spelled late arrivals, dissatisfied performers and workmen, fewer matinee patrons and those oft times disgruntled because of the long wait with the consequent disruption of their own plans.

In other respects the seasons of 1903 and 1904 were a delight to every employee of the two giant circuses and to the hundreds of thousands of people who witnessed the products of their rivalry. It was the owners and managers that experienced the headaches of this rivalry. As the second of these seasons wore on it became increasingly apparent to those concerned that such competition entailed enormous expendi-



tures of not alone money but of creative and managerial talents.

On August 3, 1904, the Greatest Show on Earth played Madison, Wisconsin. The day was a typical mid-summer one, hot and sultry, with the dispensers of lemonade doing a thriving business. As Mr. Bailey went from department to department about the lot he was very much aware that Baraboo lay only forty miles to the North. Perhaps he was not wholly surprised when a lemonade vendor informed him that several of the Ringlings were in the stands. Mr. Bailey arranged for a conference with Otto and Alf. T. Ringling. This eventually resulted in the men from Baraboo buying a one-half interest in the Forepaugh-Se's Circus, with the right to manage. It was also agreed to so route the three circuses now controlled by these six titans as to avoid overlapping of territory which had proved so costly to all. This formal agreement was signed for the seasons 1905, 1906 and 1907, and although Mr. Bailey died in April of 1906 the division of territory was continued according to its terms.

When the Ringlings entered into this agreement they had just put two decades of circusing behind them. In its inception, their dream of owning a great American circus lacked the support of even the proverbial shoestring. Twenty years of dreaming and striving, plan-

A Ringling stock car is shown in the repair shop following a wreck at Tacoma, Washington in 1902. Conover Collection.

ning and sacrificing; twenty years of fighting fires and wrecks, gamblers and unscrupulous competitors; twenty years of struggling with wind and storm, flooded lots and sodden roads were behind them. Shoulder to shoulder they awaited the future, unable to foretell its shape but confident of their ability to master it.

In varying degrees the Ringling clan were an excitable lot. Often their voices rose to high pitches in thunderous disagreement as to policies. Passersby frequently heard these voices emanating in loud and animated debate from the little frame house on the banks of the Baraboo River that served as their winterquarters office. As employees went about their duties they might recognize the voice of one or another of the brothers as he sought earnestly but excitably to persuade or dissuade the others as to certain course of action but those employees learned that once three or four of the Ringlings agreed on a point all five enforced it to the

The front door and menagerie top used in 1902 are shown here. Conover Collection.



letter. Never did they present a divided front to their organization.

With the death of James A. Bailey, George O. Starr became the chairman of the board and managing director of the Barnum & Bailey Circus, with Fred B. and Charles R. Hutchinson as his assistants. These soon learned, as Barnum had earlier, that without the guiding hand of the master the show was adrift and that at a time when the competition far exceeded that of P. T.'s day. At the annual stockholders meeting that fall it was decided that with a surplus of only \$650,000 it was impossible to declare any dividends if the show were to be kept on the road. W. W. Cole was appointed general manager for the ensuing season. With the equipment sadly in need of repairs for which adequate funds were not available, and with other complications that needed the hand of a Coup, a Barnum, a Bailey or a Ringling to solve, the stockholders decided it was wise to seek a buyer. Representatives of Bailey's widow approached the Ringlings with an offer to sell.

This was the memorable year of the depression of 1907. Money was tight in eastern financial centers, and the entire country was uneasy. The brothers looked to their financial czar, "King" Otto, for advice. From Bridgeport he wrote them a long, involved letter on October 26, which read in part, "... I had to be in New York all the time until yesterday afternoon. Today the banks close at noon in New York and the run is on as it has been since Tuesday morning ... The panic in New York is the worst they claim in its history but it does not seem to extend out much further ... If runs start on Monday on any fresh institution it will raise hell and possibly extend out of New York. Another bad feature is if without really making runs on banks all over the country there will be a quiet withdrawal of funds continually, so much cash will be withdrawn from circulation that the big industrial institutions can get no money and will have to shut down." Then in a more optimistic tone he added, "This is hardly possible as crops are big, prices high and conditions generally excellent. At the worst it will only be temporary and after this is over if successfully withstood banks and finances will be stronger than ever ..." (Letter of Otto Ringling to his brothers, dated October 26, 1907; in Braathen collection)

The brothers decided to buy and despite the money stringency managed to negotiate a loan of \$360,000 which enabled them to purchase Mrs. Bailey's holding. A little later they bought the shares held by British interests which the latter purchased from Bailey during the triumphal tour of Europe. This left the Ringlings owning both the Greatest Show on Earth and the World's



Greatest Show, in very truth the Monarchs of Circusdom. A careful perusal of various letters and telegrams together with other sources of information indicates the Ringlings acquired the Barnum & Bailey Circus for approximately \$500,000.

Among their first decisions were that Al and Charles should manage the Ringling Bros. Circus and that Otto, Alf. T. and John should supervise the Barnum & Bailey Show. Likewise it was early decided that their Forepaugh-Sells Circus should be left in winter-quarters during the 1908 season, partly to simplify getting the Barnum Show fitted into their format of operations and partly that they might use its equipment to refurbish the two larger circuses.

The Ringling family were saddened that winter by the death on December 18, 1907 of August at the age of fifty-three. Gus had never shared in the ownership of the circuses but he had been a valuable assistant in their operation.

Two seasons had passed since Mr. Bailey's genius had guided the Barnum Show, and the new owners found that its properties particularly parade equipment, seats, wagons and trains were in a sad state of repair. Some of the brothers favored giving no parade with the eastern circus but after their customary excited debate decided to repair and replace wagons and other paraphernalia and keep the magnificent street parade as an adjunct of each show.

John became the router, railway contractor and international talent scout for all the Ringling owned shows. Thus the actual day-to-day decisions on the Barnum Show were made by Otto and Alf. T. and those on the Ringling Circus by Al and Charles. Naturally two men found it more difficult than did four to watch every department of these enormous enterprises, and the four found it more difficult to manage two circuses than they had to operate the one. To counterbalance this, however, was the ease with which they could

The wagon storage yard in Baraboo is shown with the United States bandwagon in the center foreground around 1914. Circus World Museum Collection.

allot territory, map routes, divide arenic talent and negotiate contracts. The 1908 season passed pleasantly for their two circuses — perhaps a little too well, for the five brothers came to accept the view that the people of America were impartial in their appraisal of and loyalty to these two shows. Their spring openings in 1909 was to rudely disabuse their mind as to this.

The Ringlings decided to put their World's Greatest Show in Madison Square Garden for the opening that year and to use the Coliseum in Chicago for the opening of the Greatest Show on Earth. To their consternation and, perhaps, humiliation they discovered that New York circus goers were quite indifferent to the Show "from out the West," and that Chicagoans were bewildered to find not their admired Ringling Bros. Circus but the show of the long dead Barnum in their midst. Both openings were financial flops, and there was much hurried readjusting of routes for the balance of the season which largely recouped the early losses. A full decade was to pass before the circus born and bred in Baraboo, Wisconsin

again ventured to open in New York City.

For twenty-seven years the five Ringling boys had remained united in their common endeavor, the contribution of each essential to the success of the group. On March 31, 1911 in New York City their financial genius, Otto, died, and the circle was broken. He had never married and left no will. His estate was admitted to probate in the County Court for Sauk County at Baraboo. The Ringling Circus was appraised at \$129,285.00, the Barnum & Bailey Show at \$144,285.00 and the Forepaugh-Sells at \$74,395.00. This did not include the winter-quarters real estate of the shows. Charles Ringling, as administrator of Otto's estate, sold an undivided one-fifth share in these three circuses to Henry for \$69,630.00.

The death of Otto was keenly felt by his brothers. His advice and counsel had always been eagerly sought and carefully weighed in every decision of major importance. They had relied almost solely on him for guidance in financial matters. His passing brought about many changes within the organization. Symbolical of these was the discontinuance of the famous mustache pictures of the brothers on their posters, billboards, letter heads, checks, in short, on all their advertising media. There was no change in their policy of strict honesty and tactful diplomacy in all their dealing with the public nor in their expressing in tangible ways their appreciation of favors extended to them.

One debt of gratitude owed by the Ringlings was repaid many years later and in a most unusual way. When in 1887 the Ringlings arrived in Swan, Iowa to give a performance on July Fourth they were "flat broke." The people of this prairie town and many from the surrounding area flooded to see the circus from Wisconsin. The Baraboo showmen were so deeply grateful that they promised the residents of the village that when next the Ringling Circus played Swan the townsfolk were to be the guest of the owners. So

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING. BIRMINGHAM, FRIDAY

OCTOBER 16

1914

RINGLING BROS. CIRCUS
AND STUPENDOUS
NEWLY ADDED \$1,000,000 SPECTACLE
SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

89 R.R. CARS
385 ARENIC ARTISTS
108 CAGE
200 3BIG MILES OF PARADE WONDERS

1250 PERSONS IN THE CAST
300 BEAUTIFUL DANCING GIRLS
400 SINGERS
735 HORSES AND TRAIN LOAD OF SCENERY

A WONDERFUL ALL NEW NOVELTY CIRCUS

AT 10 O'CLOCK A.M. PRELIMINARY FIRST PERFORMANCE

BIG NEW STREET PARADE

See 50c ticket admits to all; Children under 12 yrs. half price. 7 Performances at 7 & 8 P.M. Doors open at 1 & 1 P.M.

rapidly did the circus grow, however, that it never again played so small a community. The promise was not forgotten. When Cecil B. de Mille learned of it he invited the citizens of Swan to be his guests at his Oscar winning movie, "The Greatest Show on Earth," in 1952.

On another occasion a Kansas farmer discovered he had inadvertently overcharged the Ringlings for the hay he had sold to them. He returned the excess payment to them with a letter of explanation. There is noted on the margin of that letter a memorandum that this honest farmer was to receive complimentary tickets whenever the circus played his community.

In 1914 the Ringlings received a communication written on a letter head from the Home for the Aged and Disabled railroad employees of America which read, "I have three partners, locomotive engineers, all inmates of the home. We have pulled your show on the Union Pacific on the line to Salt Lake City. I was one of the engineers pulling the show when one of the giraffes died at Junction City, Kansas. Would not ask for passes only our finances are very low." The men were sent passes to visit the circus in Chicago.

There are records of more than one instance in which the Ringlings loaned an employee money with which to buy a home or a farm and later forgave the interest thereon, reduced the principle, or actually cancelled the entire sum when misfortune befell the borrower.

The Ringling files reveal that they never failed to investigate any letter of complaint regarding any policy of their show or any act of an employee. They always insisted on being completely informed as to the facts in a case, and it is interesting to note that almost invariably these revealed the complainant to have been in error. Frequently the final letter from an aggrieved patron was one of apology. The following series of letters will show the unvarying policy of the Ringlings in answering every complaint:

"August 2 - 1914. Ringling Bros. Circus, Huron, S. D.

"Gentlemen: On Friday the 31st ult your show was in our city and tickets for admission were sold at Woodward's Pharmacy. A party by name of E. P. Nash bought 5 tickets at Woodward's for 5 ladies. When the ladies went to the show they wanted to buy reserved seats and were informed that the tickets bought at Woodward's could not be accepted and they would have to buy other tickets as well as reserved seats to get in which they did and they still have the 5 tickets bot at Woodward's. Mr. Nash turned the tickets over to me and asked me to write you at Huron as he does not think the management would

want to beat him out of the price of 5 tickets. I have the tickets to be returned to you on settlement. Mr. Nash is a respectable citizen of our city and does not like to be worked." Respectfully yours, John Anderson, Chief Police, Aberdeen, S. D."



Al Sweet and the 38 piece Ringling Concert Band are shown in a photo taken in 1909 in Boston, Mass. Pfening Collection.

In reply to this letter the Ringlings wrote from Huron, S. D. on August 23rd, 1914 to the Chief of Police of Aberdeen as follows:

"We have your letter of the 2nd inst., with reference to five tickets you state were purchased for five ladies and that admission was refused all these ladies at the main entrance. We further note that you say Mr. Nash is a reputable citizen of your city and does not like to be worked. In this connection will say we know nothing of Mr. Nash but assume from your remarks that he is a reputable citizen. So far as your remarks, or his remarks, which ever it may be 'that he does not like to be worked' is concerned will say that this company does not undertake to work anybody and its reputation throughout many years will not be shaken or changed by the remarks offered. We want to investigate this matter. We have interviewed every ticket seller with the show and cannot find any one who knows about the transaction. We will, therefore, thank you if you will send us the tickets as per route card enclosed in order that a thorough investigation can be made and that you may be advised in the premises as soon as same can be concluded."

On Aug. 5 - 14 the Chief of Police of Anderson wrote the Ringling Bros. as follows:

"Yours of the 3rd Huron, S. D. at hand in answer to my communication of earlier date. I am sorry to have written you so hastily I mean without learning more of the actual facts as I have learned since the ladies wanted

to buy reserved seats at the ticket wagon having their tickets with them that they bot at the Woodward Pharmacy and were informed that they could not get reserved seats then without buying tickets also. The ladies did not know that Reserved seats could have been

obtained inside and that the tickets they had would admit them but therewith bot tickets and reserved seats at the wagon. Consequently they have the tickets which they bot at the Pharmacy. In my opinion the ladies are wholly to blame in the matter. I am enclosing the tickets purchased at Woodward's Pharmacy and you can do as you see fit. Respectfully yours, John Anderson, Chief Police." There is a notation at the top of this letter as follows: 5 Blue uptown tickets were returned."

From York, Nebraska, on August 11th, 1914, the Ringlings wrote the police chief as follows: "We have your letter of Aug. 5th, and are gratified to know that there was nothing wrong on the part of our agents, but the mistake was made absolutely by the ladies concerned. We further regret that instead of the ladies thinking it incumbent upon them to rush to a Police Officer and make the statement that they had been 'worked' or otherwise defrauded they did not see fit to report to the management of the show, and thus making it possible to enlighten them and see that they paid no more money then was necessary to secure the accommodations desired at the show. If the lady will write us personally we will be pleased to remit such amount as she has paid more than she should have, but we would not want to do this through a Police Officer. We thank you very much for the trouble you have been put to and for your courtesy in the letters written us."

From Aberdeen, S. Dak. Aug. 16, '14 Besse C. Nash wrote the Ringlings as follows: "In compliance with your letter of August 11th to Chief of Police, John Anderson, am writing you to ask you to return \$2.50 for the 5 tickets he sent you.

"Would say that I went back to the Drug store of Mr. Woodward's to get the matter corrected by your man that was there, but he had gone and I was not able to see him.

"At the circus grounds, I had to pay \$5.00, the regular price for five tickets for our party, and hope you will send the \$2.50 without further delay."

From Boone, Iowa, on August 20th, '14 the Ringlings wrote Besse C. Nash as follows:

"We have your favor of the 16th inst. We are familiar with the transaction. We trust you will understand our motive in refusing to send you the amount through the Chief of Police who had nothing whatever to do with the matter; it being simply an error on your part throughout.

"We suggest a parallel case: If you went to your grocery and purchased a dollars worth of sugar and through an oversight on your part purchased another which you did not want, you would scarcely go to the Chief of Police, you would go back to your grocer who would no doubt try to straighten the matter out for you.

"Your action in the matter indicated a suspicious attitude toward those who had not injured you, and whom you may have injured by going to a Police Officer with a complaint.

"We enclose you the money."

We have in our collection a number of letters from Commercial Clubs or other organizations inviting the Ringling Bros. Circus to play their city and offering a free lot, free circus and parade licenses and water and a substantial sum of money. In all cases the Ringlings returned the money with the suggestion it be used for some worthwhile local project.

When in June of 1915 Al. Ringling lay ill in his big brownstone home in Baraboo his fellow citizens staged an elaborate celebration in his honor. He had always been particularly respected in his home town, for it was generally recognized that he was the brother who had held most tenaciously to the vision inspired by the advent of the Dan Rice river boat circus in McGregor, Iowa, in 1870 and that he had always been in the forefront in formulating the policies that had raised circuses to a high plane in the amusement world. Nor was this respect and esteem confined to his townfolk, as witness the testimony expressed in a joint resolution passed by the Wisconsin Legislature then in action in Madison. In part this resolution noted that "No citizen of Wisconsin, or any other state has afforded, in company with his associated brothers, pleasure to so many children of the country, and perhaps adults as well; and . . . He easily has become the foremost circusman of the world and contributed more than any other to elevate arenic exhibitions to the high and hon-

Circus Day Tomorrow

MONDAY OCTOBER 23

1916 OCT 23 1916

RINGLING BROS. WORLD'S GREATEST SHOWS

AND MAGNIFICENT \$1000,000 FAIRYLAND SPECTACLE

CINDERELLA

MAHMOOTH CIRCUS

89 R.R. CARS

5 GREAT TRAINS

400 FOREIGN ARTISTS

108 CAGE ZOO

41 ELEPHANT ACTORS

60 FAMOUS CLOWNS

735 HORSES

ACRES OF TENTS

1370 PERSONS

3 MILES OF PARADE MARVELS

BROUGHT TO YOUNG AND OLD ON THE BIGGEST STAGE IN THE WORLD

1250 ACTORS

300 DANCING GIRLS IN THE GORGEOUS BALLET OF THE FAIRIES

100 MUSICIANS

TRAIN LOAD OF SCENERY CHILDHOOD'S GOLDEN DREAMS COME TRUE

NEWLY ADDED DUMB ANIMAL CIRCUS FOR THE CHILDREN

PARADE AT 10 A. M. PRECEDING THE FIRST PERFORMANCE

DOORS OPEN AT 1 & 7 P. M. PERFORMANCES BEGIN AT 2 & 8 P. M.

ONE \$20. TICKET ADMITS TO ALL. (SEVEN SEATS IN FOUR BOXES)

THE YEAR'S BEST HOLIDAY

orable plane which they now occupy . . . therefore be it Resolved, that the assembly, and the senate concurring, On behalf of all the people of the commonwealth, hereby record its admiration for Mr. Ringling as a man, and for the genius displayed in the organization and operation of his great circus; and furthermore, it desires earnestly to express hope for his early restoration to health . . ." An engrossed copy was transmitted to Al. and must have seemed to him one of the richer rewards for those long and arduous years of striving to realize his youthful dream. He died in his home on New Year's Day, 1916 and was buried in the same cemetery in Baraboo to which had been committed the remains of the two brothers who had preceded him in death.

Al. Ringling's will was admitted to probate in the County Court of Sauk County at Baraboo. He made ample provision for his widow, Louise, and legacies in substantial sums to many of the department heads and other faithful employees of the circuses. His will further provided that his one-fifth share in the circuses was to go to his brothers, Alf. T., Charles, John and Henry. In the event that his widow should refuse to accept the terms of the will his brothers were given abso-

lute right to purchase his interest in all circuses in which he held an interest at the appraised value.

Even before Al's death much of Europe was locked in the titanic struggle which history came to record as World War I. The Ringlings had learned a valuable lesson in the Panic of 1907. With war clouds approaching ever closer they began to protect themselves against possible money stringencies by depositing gold coin in various banks and trust companies. They foresaw the possibility of the United States Government taking over control of the railways in the event our nation became involved in the war and debated earnestly the feasibility of transporting their circuses on trucks in the event of rail rationing. This idea was abandoned as impractical, and it may be added that even today with trucks built much more powerfully and much larger, and with highways almost unbelievably better than those of 1917-18 it would be impossible to transport other than by rail a circus of the magnitude of the Ringling Bros. or the Barnum & Bailey shows of those years.

Availability of cash and transportation were not their sole source of concern. When in 1917 our country joined the Allies in the battle against Germany and the Central European Powers, many foreign artists returned to their homelands, and it was nigh to impossible to import new acts to replace them. Bandmasters seldom knew from day to day how many musicians would report for duty with the circus or with the military services. Workmen by the score left either for military duty or for more lucrative work in war industries. It grew increasingly difficult to keep equipment and rolling stock in good repair. Replacement of hundreds of items essential to the maintenance of a circus presented owners with problems that at times seemed to defy solution.

By efforts little short of the heroic the four Ringling brothers managed to keep both their circuses rolling, affording needed amusement and relaxation to a population living under the tensions always imposed by war. Then exactly one month before the Armistice signaled the end of World War I and three days after the closing of the Ringling Circus death claimed another of the brothers. Henry died on October 11, 1918, and his circus holdings were sold to the remaining three.

The season had been a rugged one. In addition to the problems imposed directly by the war, circuses were confronted with that which seemingly invariably accompanied war—epidemic of disease. Spanish influenza became rampant in the country by October, and on the eighth of that month at Waycross, Georgia, the Ringlings decided to end their season. Movement of

troops, men and material had so taxed railway facilities that the route had been quite different than in previous years. It was deemed impractical to return to Baraboo. There is a rather wide spread belief that the Director General of Railroads, William Gibbs McAdoo, declined permission for the Ringlings to return to Wisconsin, but study failed to substantiate this, though it may be true. In any event the Ringlings did stack their Baraboo winter quarters with hay, feed, straw and everything required to carry the show thru the winter season. In any event this circus was taken into the Barnum winterquarters in Bridgeport, Connecticut never again to return to the city that had given it birth other than to show there one memorable day in 1933 in a combined homecoming golden jubilee celebration.

With the Barnum and the Ringling shows sharing winterquarters, it was decided to merge the two for the ensuing season. The spring of 1919 RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY, COMBINED SHOWS, GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH opened in Madison Square Garden in New York City. The Ringling name had become better known in the decade that had passed since first the brothers had essayed to open their circus there.

This together with the presence of the magic name of Barnum & Bailey in the show's title assured its acceptance in the eastern metropolis.

With the end of the war circus owners looked forward to a return to normalcy. Foreign troupes were again signed to performer contracts; workmen were in more generous supply; influenza subsided; and the railroads were freed of wartime restrictions. But as in never-to-be-forgotten 1888 the elements supplanted the war in imposing problems. For no less than thirty-three days the Greatest Show on Earth was confronted by torrential rains. Flooded lots compelled cancellation of seven dates and spelled late shows on others. Street parades were something less than many sponsored when rain descended relentlessly and in the summer of 1919 were frequently cancelled. With their old tenacity of purpose and with the experience of thirty-five years the Ringlings completed a tour that encompassed most of our nation east of the Rocky Mountains.

As the first season for the combined circus drew to a close death beckoned the fifth of seven brothers. On October 21, 1919 Alf. T. died, and only Charles and John were left. Alf. T.'s interest in all the Ringling owned circuses went to his son, Richard. Thus after thirty-five years of making circus history the Ringling shows were no longer owned exclusively by the sons of the harness-maker, August Rüngeling.

The ensuing decade found the Big



One fluctuating in size, sometimes traveling on ninety railway cars and again on one hundred. Street parades were discontinued and more emphasis was placed on the performance. John Ringling discovered Sarasota, Florida and as part of his campaign to promote this city made it the circus winterquarters from 1927 on. John was then the only one of the brothers, as Charles had died on December 3, 1926. His widow, Edith Conway Ringling now owned his one-third interest.

The country had weathered the uncertain years following the termination of World War I and in 1928 and 1929 was riding the crest of such a wave of prosperity as had never before been experienced in any nation in the world. Few had seen the first darkening of the economic horizons that were to radically effect circuses and every other business enterprise ere another twelve months passed. Still fewer were aware of yet other clouds that were to spell disaster for John Ringling and several American circuses.

Two years after the Ringlings merged their own show with the Barnum & Bailey Circus three men with varying

Johnny Agee and Fred Bradna are shown standing on the track in this big top photo taken around 1924. Pfening Collection.



circus experience formed the American Circus Corporation. They were Jeremiah ("Jerry") Mugivan, born in Indiana in 1873, Edward M. ("Ed.") Ballard, born in Indiana in 1873, and Albert ("Bert") Bowers, born in Kansas in 1874. During the next nine years these men bought more circus titles than any one group had previously owned. Some of these they operated for brief periods, discarding those that failed to show satisfactory profits and building others into large shows. In 1925 and for some years thereafter they featured the well known movie star, Tom Mix, on their Sells-Floto Circus, netting larger profits than any other show that season. (Mr. Zack Terrell, later owner of the Cole Bros. Circus, was manager of the Sells-Floto Circus at the time. He asserted that when Tom Mix was with that show it could set up "on the prairies and do a land office business.")

None of these three men had built circuses in the same manner as had William C. Coup, Phineas T. Barnum, James A. Bailey or the Ringlings, and it is doubtful if ever sawdust coursed through their veins. With Mugivan, Ballard and Bowers circuses were chiefly business ventures. Whether or not they were astute enough to see the gathering clouds of the Great Depression is a moot question. It is apparent that each was ready to retire and enjoy his fortune. Both of these factors may have motivated their decision to force John Ringling to buy out their American Circus Corporation.

Apparently some tentative overtures to that end had been ignored by the Ringling magnate. Mr. Zack Terrell, visiting with us one evening in his private railway car on the Cole Bros. Circus, gave the following version of this transaction. Mr. Mugivan had confided to Mr. Terrell that if Mr. Ringling would not buy the holdings of the American Circus Corporation the latter would endeavor to acquire the Madison Square



Garden lease for the spring opening. They succeeded in this, startling Mr. Ringling into action.

It was absolutely essential that the Ringling-Barnum Combine open in the Garden each spring not alone because of the large profits thus assured with which to start the new season but, equally important, because of the prestige garnered there. The reviews of the New York critics were of inestimable value. For the Big One to have opened in some other spot would automatically have signified that it has slipped from its pinnacle in the show world. This could result in heavy financial losses during the season.

With the loss of the Garden lease Mr. Ringling had to buy or sell. He bought. He now owned all the holdings of the American Circus Corporation, of which the Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson, Sparks and Barnes Circuses had been on tour that season.

To buy out his arch competitors Mr. Ringling had had to borrow nearly \$2,000,000. This was October, 1929. Soon the news wires were carrying information regarding the stock market crash, an event that was to alter the way of life of millions of Americans.

Another factor played a lesser role in Ringling losing the Garden lease. John Ringling had long been at odds with the majority stock holders of the Garden. He had been one of those instrumental in the construction of the new building and had held stock in the enterprise until he grew disgusted with the management. The latter insisted on having a clause in the Ringling lease each spring whereby the circus would permit boxing each Friday night. There had been disagreements, too, as to the rental fees. In 1929 when the time arrived to negotiate a new lease, Mr. Ringling threw down the gauntlet—there would be no yielding to boxing on Friday nights or the circus would open in another New York building.

On March 27, 1930, The Greatest Show on Earth opened in the Coliseum

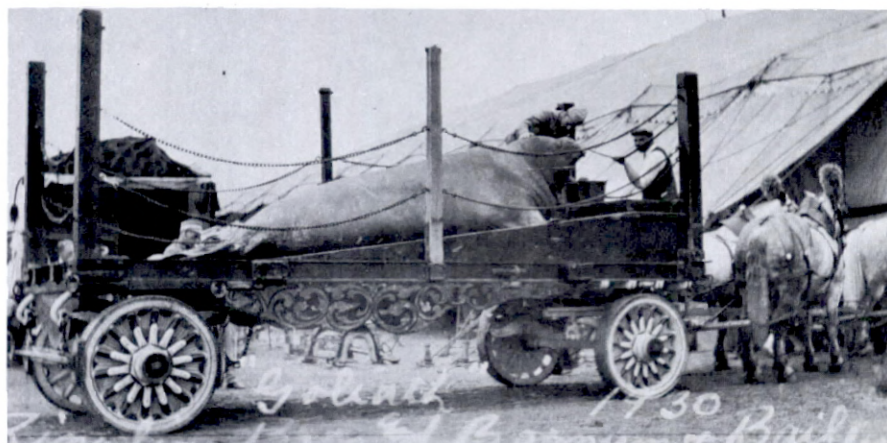
Ringling-Barnum returned to Baraboo, Wisconsin for a stand during its Golden Anniversary tour in 1933. This lot view shows the big top laid out on the Baraboo fairgrounds. Pfening Collection.

in the Bronx for ten days then moved to the Garden to show April 7 to 27. The newly acquired Sells-Floto Circus which Jerry Mugivan had planned to put in the Garden, opened in the Coliseum in Chicago on March 29 to run until April 15 when it moved to the huge new Stadium on the West side of the "Windy City."

The five circuses purchased from the American Circus Corporation fared poorly and one by one were discontinued until in 1938 the Al. G. Barnes and Sells-Floto titles were combined for their final tour, augmented the latter half of that season by acts and railroad cars and other equipment from the Ringling-Barnum Circus which had closed earlier that year at Scranton, Pennsylvania due to labor difficulties.

The Great Depression continued to

A feature of the show in 1930 was "Goliath" the giant sea elephant. The special wagon used to parade the mamal around the hippodrome track is shown in a Eddie Jackson Photo.



cut in on the profits of amusement enterprises. Bread must come before entertainment, and millions were dependent on welfare agencies for bread.

Richard Ringling died in 1931, and his widow, Aubrey, inherited his share in the circus.

Unable to meet a payment on the interest due on his 1929 loan, John Ringling was in no position to refuse when his creditors laid down an ultimatum demanding reorganization. His personal finances were hopelessly tangled and his health broken.

Thus in 1932, nearly fifty years after five young brothers took their first circus on the road from Baraboo, Wisconsin, the partnership they had formed was terminated, supplanted by a corporation. In that close to half century of fighting their way from a circus whose entire personnel (executives, performers, advance men, bill posters, workmen) numbered twenty individuals to the Goliath of Circusdom with a personnel of something around 1600 people there had never existed so much as a scratch of a pen between them. No written agreement had ever been needed between brothers whose word was their bond. Such was the quality of their integrity that through the years many of their performers and workmen had seen fit not to withdraw on pay day the money due them but rather let all or a substantial part of their salaries accumulate until the final pay day of the year, confident always that their funds were as secure with the Ringling brothers as they would be with any bank. This was at wide variance with the situation that existed on virtually every circus not Ringling owned.

John Ringling was unable to actively engage in the circus management the last three or four years of his life because of failing health. On December 2, 1936, he died of pneumonia at the age of seventy. The last Ringling was gone.

In the words of George Ade, in alluding to these brothers, "They found the business in the hands of vagabonds and put it into the hands of gentlemen."



1946 SOUVENIR PROGRAM and SEASON ROUTE

One of the greatest box office attractions in the annals of circus history was the one and only Clyde Beatty. This is the story of the events and physical equipment that made up the railroad circus that bore his name. Beatty's life story has amply been covered (see *Bandwagon* July-August, 1965) and details of his personal career will not be covered in this narrative except for what is necessary to bring to light pertinent facts for this story.

Beatty had always dreamed of owning his own railroad circus. He never fielded a show of his own until the season of 1945. In that year, he obtained the Ray Rogers Wallace Bros. truck show equipment and toured the eastern half of the country. He had a profitable season, but was beset with all sorts of problems including wrecks, floods, blowdowns, stock killed, and the crowning blow when the red wagon was stolen right off the lot. The show made it back to Macon, Georgia quarters and the rail show bug was still in the back of Clyde's mind.

Now enters the real showman of modern times. Arthur M. Concello can be credited as the man who gave the Beatty railroad circus its life. Concello is one of the very few performers in all circus history to have both a business sense and a working sense of showman-

ship. After leaving the Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey show in 1942, because of policy differences with the owners, Concello purchased the Russell Bros. Circus equipment and leased the title in June of 1943 (*Bandwagon* May-June, 1969). In 1944 he made a flat salary and small percentage deal with Clyde Beatty to furnish his acts and stock. No partnership existed.

Art put together the Russell Bros. Pan-Pacific Railroad Circus for the season of 1945 utilizing the train and wagons from the Beckman & Gerety Carnival. In early October of 1945 the Russell Bros. Pan-Pacific Circus had jumped in ahead of the Cole Bros. Circus in south-central Texas. The route was to take it east into Louisiana, but a quick route change was made after San Antonio that sent the show westward. The show came into El Paso for three days, Oct. 8-9-10. On the 10th rain, hail, and high winds ripped the big top to shreds. Concello decided to seek quarters right there. The show was contracted as far west as El Centro, Calif. It was to have closed there and wintered in San Diego. However, it was too late in the season to try and locate another big top. Right on the spot it was decided to call the season quits and winter right there in the Livestock Exhibition buildings in El Paso.

During the fall of 1945 Beatty appeared with his animals at Shrine circuses in Houston and Fort Worth, Texas. At Houston Concello had many conferences with Beatty; and Clyde went to El Paso to inspect the Russell equipment.

The December 22, 1945 *Billboard* hit the stands with a large advertisement announcing that the Clyde Beatty truck circus property was up for sale. Rumors flew fast. Friends of Beatty's announced that he had not closed with Concello. Shortly thereafter Concello told confi-

One flat car was added to the Russell train for the 1946 Beatty tour. The lone Mt. Vernon flat #58, formerly on Arthur Bros. and either H-W or Barnes before

SEASON OF 1946

By Donald R. Carson, Walt Matthie, and Gordon Borders

dants at the Wichita Shrine Circus that he had made a deal. Louis Goebel, who had a lien on the Arthur Bros. Circus train at Baldwin Park, Calif., reported Beatty had turned down a chance to buy that show.

After the Shrine dates Beatty took his stock to the truck quarters at Macon, Georgia; and then onto his Fort Lauderdale, Florida Zoo. It was there that the details were finalized between Beatty and Concello on December 31st. It was announced by Paul M. Conaway, Beatty's attorney, that in 1946 Beatty would utilize the train and equipment of Concello's Russell Bros. and that Ira M. Watts, former show owner and manager, had been named the show's manager. Arrangements were being made with U.S. Tent & Awning Co. of Chicago, Illinois for all new canvas.

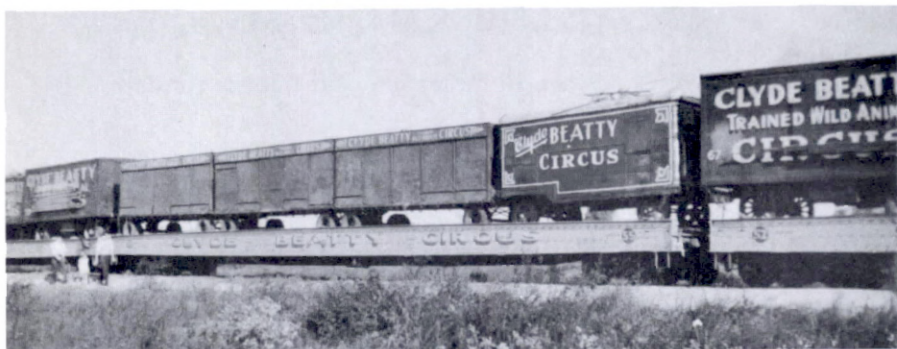
Not made known at the time, but this was another deal between Beatty and Concello as had been made in 1944. Concello made a flat salary and percentage deal with Clyde to furnish his acts and stock. The percentage was increased slightly for the use of the title. Clyde did not have any other financial interest in the show. Art Concello was the owner.

On January 15th Floyd King arrived at Macon, Georgia to take possession of the former Beatty truck show property which he and partner Harold J. Rumbaugh had just purchased in its entirety from Beatty. Thus the new illustrious King Bros. Circus was formed and Beatty was freed of his truck show property.

Beatty needed cage wagons to transport his cats on the railroad train, so an order was executed with the Harvey Zimmerman welding shop of Eureka, Illinois to build a set of four new type cages. These units were to have oak bodies, steel sides and gears, and the poles were fitted for use with tractors.

that, is shown here loaded with wagon #128, grandstand lumber, the ticket wagon and #233 containing the Beatty act props. Cripps Collection.





Each cage was to be 18 ft. long and have five compartments. Steel trimmings were welded on. A representative of the circus was sent to supervise their construction. These cages were to resemble trailers rather than traditional rail show cage wagons used in the past.

In early February it was announced that Wallace Love had closed negotiations for a seventeen day run on the centrally located Washington Blvd. and Hill St. lot in Los Angeles and the contracting agents were busy setting the route westward from El Paso.

A flat car was purchased by Concello from the Arthur Bros. Circus train. This was a Mount Vernon Car Co. built flat that had either previously seen service on the Hagenbeck-Wallace or Al G. Barnes Circus trains. Concello shipped it to El Paso but some difficulty was encountered when the Internal Revenue Service attached it for \$82,000 taxes due plus penalties. Somehow the difference was settled and title was cleared to the flat. It made a striking appearance in the train with its fishbelly design in the lineup with the seven former Russell Bros. Warren Tank Car Co. built flats.

Concello removed one car from the Russell Bros. train when he sold off the pie car "Trocadero" to Al Wagner's Cavalcade of Amusements. He also sold off the five Russell Bros. elephants to the Kelly-Miller Circus.

Walt Matthie was to handle advance press, radio, and schools for the show and left his home at Long Beach, Calif. on March 8th. He arrived in El Paso on the 10th and was asked by Mr. Watts to bring in the baggage car of bulls, cats, and stock that was coming in from the Detroit Shrine Circus date. It arrived at noon the next day and he had it moved to the quarters team track. There were no loading runs so they used baled hay. They got them all out, but it took time. Bert Pettus was in charge of the bulls and Matthie landed a good story break in the El Paso papers. Matthie then went ahead of the show as planned. Before long the show got behind on contracting dates and he was contracting towns in Southern California.

Veteran show painter "Yellow" Burnett set about to paint the show wagons and train and a fine job he did indeed.

The only new wagons were four 18 ft. cages built in Eureka, Illinois. Three of them are shown on this flat #55. J. Beardsley Collection.

In early March the new cages were shipped from Bloomington, Illinois aboard system flat cars. They were shipped unpainted. At quarters they were painted a brilliant orange color as was the arena and animal chute wagon. The baggage wagons were painted red with large silver letters reading "CLYDE BEATTY" and "CIRCUS" with smaller letters in between reading "Trained Wild Animals." The show wagons were a conglomeration and they will be listed individually in the following train loading order. The main backbone of the fleet were thirteen former Beckmann & Gerety carnival wagons, which will be told in later parts of this narrative did not hold up to the riggers of the daily hauling demanded by circus wagons. Two large semi truck trailers from the Russell Bros. truck circus loaded the big top poles and canvas. A couple of four-wheel Case tractors, a Mack truck, and two cab-over-engine trucks provided the basic overland pulling power for the wagons.

TRAIN LOADING ORDER:

Flat Cars: (Painted aluminum with blue lettering with orange shading).

- #51: #1 4-wheel Case Tractor (yellow)
- #20 Cab-over engine Chevrolet truck, blacksmith, mechanics, and carpenter shop (enclosed box body)
- #2 4-wheel Case Tractor (yellow)
- #19 Mack Truck, water tank with pump and hose.
- #52: #47 Chevrolet 6-wheel Semi-Truck and Trailer, Big Top poles and rigging. (Former Russell Bros. truck show).
- #221 Cookhouse Wagon (Ex B & G)
- #53: #314 Cab-over engine Ford, 6-wheel Semi-Truck and Trailer, Big Top canvas. (Former Russell Bros. truck show).
- #234 Seat Stringer and Plank Wagon. (Ex B & G).

- #26 Cab-over engine Chevrolet truck, Stakes and automatic stake driver.

- #55: #261 Wardrobe and Prop Wagon. (Ex B & G).

- #59 Menagerie Canvas and Pole Wagon, Harness in front end. Ex B & G).

- #232 Rigging and Ring Curb Wagon, Open top. (Ex B & G).

- Small 2-wheel stake driver.
- #56: #39 Side Show Poles and Canvas Wagon, including Stands. (Ex B & G).

- #18 Light Plant Wagon. (Ex B & G had been built by Big Eli).

- #169 Seat Jacks and Plank Wagon. Open top. Ex B & G).

- #12 Small Light Plant Wagon. (Ex B & G).

- #54: #3 Cage (4 Tigers & 1 Lion) (Note: Cages were painted orange with yellow lettering with blue shading and had four sets of dual wheels with 600 x 16 tires).

- #4 Cage (3 Lions & 2 Tigers)

- #5 Cage (5 Lions)

- #16 Red Ticket Wagon (with foldup light stop to illuminate the midway). (Springfield built wagon coming from the Russell truck show).

- #57: #6 Cage (5 Lions)

- #87 Seat Plank Wagon. (Ex B & G).

- #17 Chair Wagon with small compartment for dogs. (Ex B & G).

- #67 Chair Wagon. (Ex B & G).

- #58 (Mt. Vernon built):
- #68 Concession Stand Wagon. (Ex B & G).

- Steel Arena & Chute Wagon for Beatty's Cat Act. (Painted orange).

- Beatty's Prop Wagon. (painted all red, later numbered #233). (Usually contained Beatty's chimps while on the lot.).

- #128 Grandstand Platforms & Planks Wagons. Ex B & G).

- Stock Cars: (Painted aluminum with a red stripe across the bottom with yellow letterboards with red letters. Ends were painted a reddish-brown color.)

- #71 20 Head of Ring Stock Horses and 12 Shetland Ponies.

- #72 8 Elephants, 4 Camels, and 2 Llamas.

- Sleepers: (Painted orange with aluminum roofs and lettering.)

- #60 "Randy" (76 ft.) Art Concello's Private Car.

- #61 (80 ft.) (Steel frame with composite wood body).

- #62 (76 ft.) Sleeper and dining car (all-steel construction).
- #63 (76 ft.) (Steel frame with composite wood body).
- #64 (76 ft.) (Steel frame with composite wood body).

The following equipment traveled overland in the states, but in Canada was on four system flats.

Red concession supply semi-trailer.
Show personnel bus.
White Side Show Semi.
Pickup Truck.
Beatty's House Trailer.
Three Automobiles.
Midway Concession Diner Semi Trailer.

In California the show also used the following overland units:

#38 Harlon Dewitt's Fire Truck.
Side Show Sleeper.
Searchlight Truck.
Coca Cola Truck.

(Note: This information compiled from the official inventory supplied Waldo T. Tupper by Ira M. Watts from Seattle, Wash. July 11, 1946 now in the Bob Taber Collection and notes and information compiled on the show in Long Beach, Calif. by Donald R. Carson.) (From available photos the show did not load always the same way; but the above is the way it was in most cases. Sometimes the smaller wagons were shifted.)

The season opened with eight elephants (all Beatty-owned) and six of these were to be the mainstays of the show on rails. Three more were later added in other seasons. It is planned to continue this story through the end of the Beatty rail show, so rather than jump back later to elephant history a complete list of the elephants used through the years will be presented now. Clyde Beatty Circus Elephants:

Sidney:

The ticket wagon was originally built for the Russell truck show by the Springfield Wagon Co. It is shown here in 1946 with one of the Case tractors. Harry Quillen Photo.

The winter of 1925-26 arrived at the William P. Hall Farm Lancaster, Missouri. Named for a relative of Hall's. Played vaudeville and the fair circuits out of the Hall Farm with two other elephants named Mary and Wilma. This was known as the "Fire House Kids Act."

She remained at the Hall Farm until after the Cole Bros. Circus opened in 1935 and when the banks began to foreclose these three along with six others (including Anna May) were sold to Cole Bros.

On Cole Bros. Circus the remainder of 1935 through the 1938 season.

After 1938 when the Cole show got into financial difficulties, Clyde Beatty withdrew from the show and went on his own. He took with him Sidney, Mary, and Anna May.

She appeared on the various Beatty shows such as at Atlantic City in 1939, with Hamid Morton in 1940, the Johnny J. Jones Carnival in 1941 and 1942, Wallace Bros.-Clyde Beatty in 1943, Beatty-Russell Bros. in 1944, and the 1945 Clyde Beatty truck circus.

Sidney was featured on the Beatty railer from 1946 thru 1956 and has since been with the truck show bearing his name and on through to date with the Beatty-Cole Circus. In 1962 she was on loan to M-G-M for the movie "Jumbo".

Mary:

On Yankee Robinson 1919-1920. Howes Great London 1921. Gollmar Bros. 1922. John Robinson 1923. Gollmar Bros. 1924-1925. Heritage Bros. 1926. Sold to Wm. P. Hall and leased to Geo. Engesser's Schell Bros.

Career exactly the same as Sidney through 1949.

She died in the spring of 1950 before the show left El Monte, Calif. of pneumonia. (See more facts on this under Marion.)

Anna May:

In the winter of 1925-26 five new punks arrived at the Hall Farm being imported by Louis Ruhe. Anna May was among them.

She was leased out by Hall to various

shows and was on the Sam B. Dill-owned circuses. (Gentry, Robbins, and Dill) 1931-34.

In 1935 she went to Cole Bros. in the same transaction as Sidney and Mary.

Her career remained the same as Sidney through 1962.

Anna May was the bull taught to ride Beatty's lion and tiger on her back (the lion died long before Beatty's rail show appeared).

In 1963 with a reshuffling of the herd Anna May went to the Sells & Gray Circus and has since remained with that show.

Hattie (originally Addie):

Originated on the Downie Bros. Circus in the mid-1930's. Was named after Charles Sparks' wife.

She remained on the Downie show until it closed in 1939.

In 1940 she was purchased along with four others by Ray Rogers and was on the Wallace Bros. Circus until it was purchased by Beatty after the 1944 season.

In 1945 she was on Beatty's truck circus and her career was the same as Sidney and Anna May through 1962.

In the 1963 reshuffling she went to the King Bros. Circus and remained on that show until the summer of 1969 when she was electrocuted while raising a tent pole at Ellenville, New York.

Babe:

On Downie Bros. Circus from 1927 through 1939.

Show connections the same as Hattie on through until 1958. In May of that year she died on the Beatty Show in Pennsylvania of tuberculosis.

Cora:

Career same as Hattie through 1957.

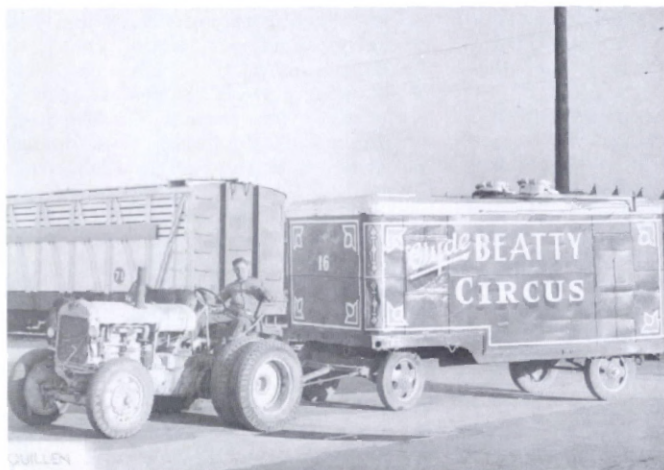
In 1958 she was sold to the Beers-Barnes Circus and was on that show through 1966.

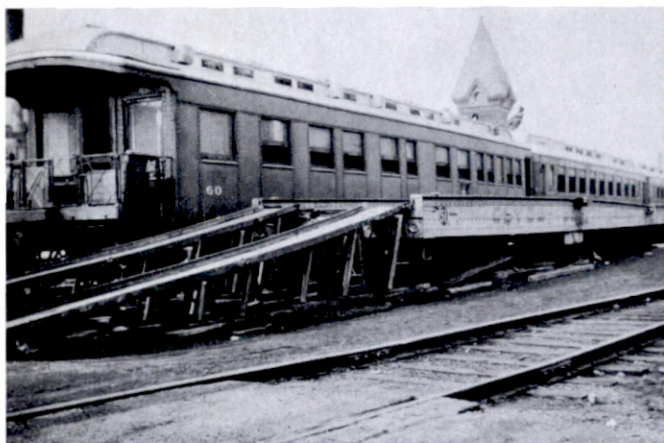
In 1967 she was on Hoxie Bros. Circus and died March 13, 1968.

Inez:

Career same as Hattie through 1957.

Henry Kyes is shown with his ten piece band. Harry Quillen Photo.





Art Concello's private car "Randy" is shown at the runs at a Canadian date. Tyson Photo.

In 1958 she was said to have been shot in DeLand, Florida on account of no room to carry her on the road and no one to take care of her at the quarters. **Marion:**

Career same as Hattie through 1949. The winter of 1949-50 was very wet and rainy. The Beatty elephant herd was housed in the menagerie tent the entire winter standing in water a good deal of the time. Beatty was in Florida on a fishing trip. The supt. of elephants wired Beatty telling him he could rent a nearby barn for \$30 a month. Beatty would not go for the added expense — so — he lost two of his elephants, and would have lost two more if it had not been for Joe Metcalf nursing them back to health. Joe told Bob Bernard that Beatty never paid him for his trouble. Marion died during the 1950 spring engagement at Washington & Hill St. in Los Angeles, Calif.

Susie:

Imported by Henry Trefflich.

In 1952 sold to the Clyde Beatty Circus and has remained in the herd to date with the Beatty-Cole Circus.

Pewee:

Career the same as Susie, however in recent years as the bull grew in size her name has been changed to Pete.

Dina:

A punk owned by the Ford Motor Car dealer in Phoenix, Arizona.

In 1954 was sold to the Clyde Beatty Circus and since remained in the Beatty-Cole herd to the present day.

Besides the bulls, Beatty owned all the cats worked in his act, plus one Liberty horse act and a pony drill.

The new show opened at El Paso, Texas March 22nd with a straw matinee and two capacity night houses. There was a shower of goodwill messages and floral wreaths to commemorate the success wished the new show.

Eight days were spent in Arizona at six stands before entering California. April 1 through 7 was spent in San

Diego at Rosecrans and Frontier Sts. and this was the first rail show to hit the area since before World War II due to wartime restrictions on train movements into the area. The last day there the Billy Hammond aftershow was added.

After two stops the show pulled into Los Angeles for a 17 day run. This was to prove to be a lush date with a \$205,000 gross for thirty five performances. It was packed houses for nearly every show. The show's generator's were not used. A transformer on a wagon to tap local power lines was used so that the show's own generators could be overhauled. Walt Matthie was back on the show and helped Bill Antes on the front door to handle all the V.I.P.s that visited the show.

A new feature in the days following the awareness of fire prevention following the Hartford fire was Harlon DeWitt's fire truck on display near the front door loaded with fire extinguishers and all sorts of fire fighting apparatus.

With the Los Angeles date a new middle piece was added to the dressing room top making it a three poler. Here is a complete run down on the show's canvas:

BIG TOP: 130 ft. round with three 50 ft. middle pieces. (Maximum seating capacity between 4,000 and 4,500 with folding chairs on both sides and blue planks on the ends).

Menagerie Top: 70 ft. round with three 30 ft. middle pieces. (Housed Beatty's 4 cages on one side next to big top with 8 elephants and other lead stock on opposite side).

Big Show Marquee: 30 x 25 ft. (Only title "BIG SHOW" "Main Entrance".)

Side Show Top: 60 ft. round with two 30 ft. middle pieces.

Side Show Marquee: 20 x 20 ft.

Cookhouse: 40 by 80 ft. pushpole.

Four small Dressing Room tents.

Two Donickers.

One Midway Concession Top.

Reserve Seats were sold from an aluminum stand.



Wagon #221 carried the cook house. Pfening Collection.

Pad Room Top (horses on one side and dressing room in other half).

Concession Supply Tent.

Three Stands on Midway.

One weak feature on the front end was the Side Show bannerline. These were oldies that Pete Kortess had been using for several seasons and they had been on the Beatty-Russell show in 1944.

A special feature on the show was a truck that was really a beauty. It was a flat bed with a large aircraft-type searchlight to sweep the sky at night to lure in the crowds. Up near the cab were four 500-candlepower lights that were used to illuminate the lot on tear-down and allowed the generators to go to the train early.

After the L. A. date the show made a loop through Southern California cities. Business was big in this area. Walt Matthie contracted Long Beach for three days on a new lot that was more than five miles out in the northern section of town. Not even a bus strike could keep the patrons away from the lot.

The only competition the show had was Jimmy Woods' 101 Ranch Wild West Circus which had played this area and then went on up the coast and was generally about six weeks ahead of the Beatty show. The railer used lots of "Wait" paper and the results seemed to pay off. After Oregon and Washington dates the 101 Ranch show turned eastward and Beatty had no other circus competition until late in the fall in the Southern areas.

In mid-May the show moved up the coast and did well in the coastal cities. During the tenth week there was talk of a rail strike. It it materialized, it would be called for midnight Thursday May 23rd. On the morning of the 23rd as the show was unloading in Palo Alto, Calif. information came from San Francisco that the strike was set. By noon Ira Watts called the Southern Pacific for an engine and crew to move the

empty train to the next stand, which was Redwood City, some ten miles away.

The show played the two performances in Palo Alto and when the night show was over, the wagons were loaded and with the help of several rented tractors, and a California Highway Patrol escort they were moved overland to Redwood City. The bulls and lead stock were walked over under escort. The show bus moved all personnel to the train in Redwood City. All of this made news. Redwood City was billed for one day, Friday May 24th. No one knew how long the strike might last, so the show gave two performances on Saturday May 25th to better houses than the first day in, because of the news media coverage of the stranded circus.

Late Saturday May 25th word came that the strike might be settled at midnight and crews would go back to work on Sunday. The strike was settled, but not crews were available until nearly noon on Sunday. With a slow run to Napa, it would have been impossible to make two shows, so it was decided to blow Napa and go on into San Rafael for Monday May 27th. After a route change Napa was picked up on Tuesday June 4. On the 28th Walt Matthie and one other man redated the window cards and litho dates for Napa to read the new date. Then they did the country route and town daubs.

The Beatty show moved on up into the Redwood country with some long rail jumps. The show arrived in Eureka for three capacity houses. It was the first rail circus in there since Al G. Barnes & Sells-Floto made it in 1937.

On June the 7th, Matthie was doing press and radio in Klamath Falls, Oregon. He went to the telegraph office to see if he had a telegram and was surprised to see the big billing truck of the show. Talking to the driver he found out it was being held by the Highway Patrol. Licenses and insurance papers were the problem. On the spot he contacted an insurance agent in Los Angeles and squared with the Highway Patrol.

The route moved back across the Sacramento Valley and eastward to play Reno, Nevada for three shows June 8th and 9th. At this date Pete Kortess unfurled a new much needed bannerline for his side show front and good business was enjoyed by all the shows. A couple of more dates were made in Northern California and then seven dates were made on the move north through Oregon.

When the show was in Klamath Falls, Matthie was checking Spokane, Washington. Circus fan Harper Joy contracted this one. Matthie then went on to Wallace, Idaho but was shut out because of a local frontier days celebration. He then went to Missoula, Mont.,

and Helena and Great Falls. He was shut out of Great Falls being too close to the fair dates. While in Great Falls he received a wire from Concello to meet him in Seattle.

A big three day stand was made in Portland, Oregon with the side show enjoying its best day since leaving Los Angeles. It was at this point that Concello and his advance came to a conclusion that was to prove a big winner. The original plans east were cancelled. The show was to swing east to Spokane and then back to the coast and on up into Canada.

A late arrival in Spokane and wet weather didn't dampen spirits and the business enjoyed was exceptional. They moved back across Washington and four days in Seattle brought five sellouts and four three quarter capacity houses. After Bellingham, Washington July 14th with a Sunday off the train moved into British Columbia.

We are fortunate to have Matthie's account of exactly how the show made its moves into Canada. Arrangements were made to have the bill truck stored and then shipped east on a flat car when needed. It must be remembered this was the first large railroad circus to go to Vancouver Island, and the first U.S. circus into Canada in eight years. In 1912 the 101 Ranch show took their stock and performers to Victoria on Vancouver Island on a small steamer from Blaine, Wash. and played on a soccer field. The Gentry Bros. ferried one of their units across to the island in 1902 and the small Christy Bros. Circus made the move in 1921.

In going to Vancouver Island there was no precedent and every detail had to be worked out. This involved rail moves, tidal times, a small railroad, immigration, and all the many ordinary details of day to day operation of the show. A 14-section tourist sleeper was leased from the Canadian National to carry Pete Kortess side show people. They had been using two big semi trailer sleepers which were sent east. Four 60 ft. system flats were added to carry the rest of the overland equipment. On the move to Vancouver Island it was necessary to leave the four system flats and the private car "Randy" in Vancouver to be picked up upon return.

With arrival time at the barge dock in Vancouver being critical and the inspection at the line, the additional time was needed even though the run to Vancouver was only 58 miles, so a matinee only was scheduled on Saturday at Bellingham. If the barge loading was missed we would lose 12 hours. The show would proceed via Whiterock, B.C. to Vancouver. There it would be barged. The first stand in Canada was to be Port Alberni on Vancouver Island.

It was decided that they would take a new approach to the immigration prob-

lem instead of waiting for emigration and health inspections at the line, they would take the officials to the show in Bellingham. When the show came in this paid off. On Saturday July 13, when the train arrived at Whiterock, the port of entry, the manifest was handed to the officer. He walked the length of the train and counted the cars, handed back a copy of the manifest, and the train was on its way. Many shows in the past had been tied up for several hours by inspections.

The train arrived in Vancouver on the Great Northern with ample time for transfer to Canadian Pacific and the movement of the sleepers to the steamer dock and return to the barge dock. The barge loading was set for 6 A.M. Sunday July 14th. The barges to be used were of the ship hull type (not scows) and were 260 ft. long with three cuts of track on each. Each was towed by a seagoing tug of the Canadian Pacific Steamship Co. Ordinarily these barges served in freight car movement to the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railroad on Vancouver Island. The distance from the Vancouver barge dock to the barge dock north of Nanaimo 11 miles, was 42 miles across the Strait of Georgia.

The barge consist was:

Barge #1: 5 flat and 2 stock cars.

Barge #2: 5 sleepers and 3 flat cars. The Canadian Pacific Steamship Co. did concede to allow the bull hands and grooms to ride the barges, but all other personnel had to ride the steamer. The barge dock at Vancouver was several miles from the steamer dock. CPR agreed to move the sleepers to the steamer dock to unload the personnel. At the other end on Vancouver Island the barge dock being 11 miles from the steamer dock at Nanaimo made it necessary once again to make a special movement of the sleepers to pickup the personnel. The train was then made up and moved the 93 miles to Port Alberni.

The movement of the barges was controlled by the rise and falls of the tide which could be as much as 25 ft. The loading time had to be right on the nose at high tide. The trip would take 12 hours so as to unload at the high tide. Loading time allowable was

Wagon #59 carried the menagerie canvas and poles, compartment in front carried harness. Chet Shusser Collection.



under two hours, because that was as long as the loading aprons would be reasonably level. The same operation had to be repeated the following Sunday when the show returned from the Island.

When the show was being loaded on the first barge at Vancouver they ran a cut of cars onto the center track and then started to run the next cut on the outside. The barge healed over with a precarious list. The cut was quickly pulled back and it was decided to get another engine and run the two outside cuts on simultaneously. This idea worked out fine.

On the Island the show played Port Alberni, Courtenay, Victoria, and Nanaimo. Trackage on the Island belonged to the Esquimalt & Nanaimo RR, a subsidiary of the Canadian Pacific. Track ran from Esquimalt (4 miles west of Victoria) to Courtenay 140 miles northerly. A branch served Port Alberni. The motive power was two older type Pacific locomotives. The show sort of hung up the railroad's operations for the week as they had one engine tied up all the time and the other part of the time.

Business for the show on Vancouver Island was tremendous. Three straw houses a day was to set the pattern for the entire Canadian tour. At Port Alberni people came in wagons and on horseback. Many of them had never seen a lion, an elephant, nor a tiger. The time was right and the economic conditions were with them and the money rolled in. The exchange rate between U.S. and Canadian currency was on a par and there had been no large American railroad circuses into Canada since 1938 and 1939. One can't imagine the crowds that turned out to see their first real circus.

The next Sunday the show returned to Vancouver. July 22nd through 26th were spent on Cambie Grounds. Crowds were terrific and extra police were needed to handle the mobs. Extra night shows were scheduled each night and

Wagon #18 had been built for B & G by the Eli Bridge Co. It contained the large light plant. Harry Quillen Photo.

one day the side show handled 10,559 admissions at 25 and 50c. The week was finished off at Chilliwack with two straw houses.

Prior to the entry into Canada general agent Tupper contacted George Singleton of Winnipeg. He had worked for Conklin and Royal American Shows and was familiar with the territory. He would assist in contracting the upper route and Walt Matthie would take the lower route to Winnipeg.

The next week was spent crossing British Columbia. Walt Matthie's reflections on Trail, B.C. are interesting. The town is located at the bottom of a 2000 ft. gorge alongside the Columbia River. The main industry to support the town is a huge smelter located to the west of town. The problem was the entry into town down a branch railroad from Rossland at the rim down into town. It was steep and nothing but short curves. It is all right for standard length cars, but the show cars posed a problem. The road into Trail parallels the railroad. Matthie gave some thought to unloading at the top, but visions of runaway wagons crossed his mind. So he got together with the CPR agent and yardmaster and concluded that the train could be cut at Rossland and brought down one car at a time. Time was somewhat of a factor because of a 256 mile run over the mountains from Penticton. They decided on a night show only on Tuesday July 30 and two shows on Wednesday July 31st. The run to Nelson, after getting back up to Rossland, was only 46 miles. The only lot that would hold the show was the soccer field across the river from downtown.

When the show came in they came down one car at a time. Trackage was at a premium, so the sleepers were parked in the center of the main street. This was one time that the show people couldn't complain about being so far out of town.

Matthie contracted Lethbridge for a split date on Saturday Aug. 3 and Monday Aug. 5. No shows being allowed on Sundays. It seems like it's always windy in that town and they had to

show with just sidewalls. The business stayed big in Calgary and Edmonton and then across Saskatchewan. Long jumps were made on time, but some of the Manitoba dates were off slightly. Sundays off were spent in painting up the show.

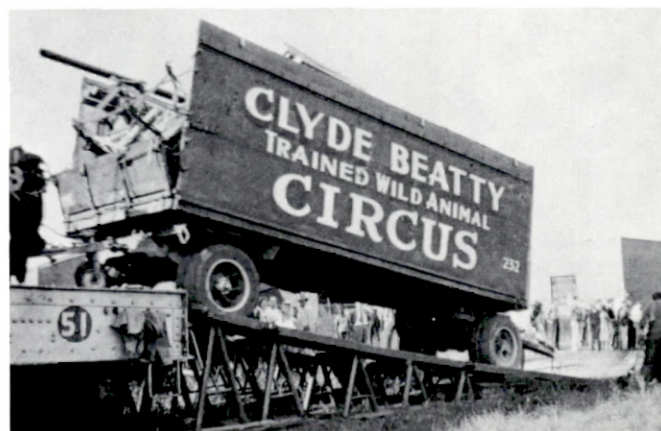
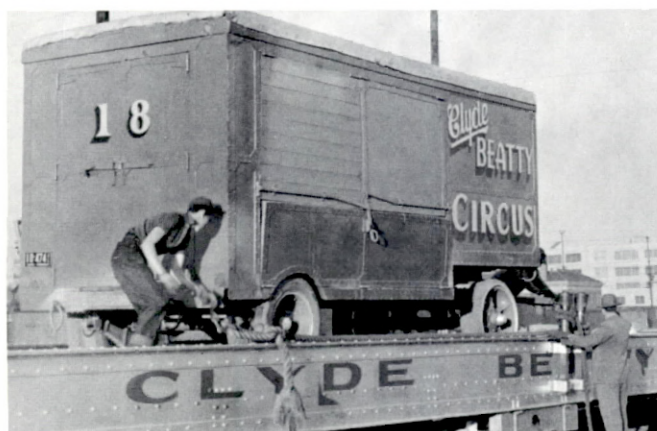
Matthie was sent back into the states and booked Grand Forks and Fargo, North Dakota. Concello changed his mind and decided to stay in Canada because of the polio epidemic in the States. Matthie got a wire to abandon this plan and jump east to Toronto to pick up the route from there. Singleton would take the top of the lakes towns.

Four days were made in Winnipeg to turnaway night business, but the matinees did not fair too well. After a Saturday at Kenora, Ontario a long jump was made to Fort William. Then the next day was taken off for another long jump to North Bay. Business was good all the way across and down the province of Ontario.

Matthie tried to book Toronto but got closed out because nine of the men on the council refused his license due to being Shriners and they wanted to protect a date they were sponsoring in October. Also was unable to turn up a suitable lot in Ottawa. At St. Thomas the show used the same lot and crossing where Jumbo was killed. Matthie says an agent never knows where he might end up. At Brantford he stayed in an old hotel and had the same suite that the Prince of Wales, later to become King George V, had occupied.

Kitchener produced two turnaways in the rain and Brantford the next day gave two straws and a sellout. Hamilton for two days Sept. 25 and 26th proved utterly disappointing as arrangements were made to re-enter the States. As Billboard reported the Beatty show returned with a wagon full of moola. The one important thing was the management took the chance

The rigging and ring curbs were carried in wagon #232, it was one of the few soft rubber tired wagons on the show. J. Beardsley Collection.



on Canada at the right time and it paid off handsomely.

Two days spent in Niagara Falls, New York turned up light business. But it was getting late and the show had to make it South fast before the weather turned bad. Pittsburgh was considered to be a break, but was dropped. The jump would be from Niagara Falls, N.Y. to Norfolk, Va. a distance of 675 miles and three days were to be involved in making the run. The day after the show left Niagara Falls there were snow flurries there.

The tops were erected in Norfolk, Virginia for an October 2 thru 4 date. Business was fair and the show moved on into North Carolina dates at Wilson and Charlotte. The last night was lost in Charlotte due to a severe storm and the show had legal entanglements with the Southern State Fair and ended up losing the case in court after appearing too close to the fair dates.

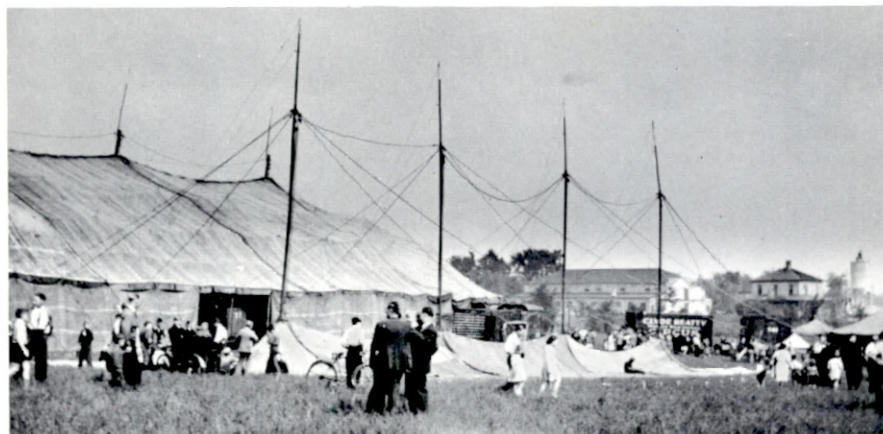
Business was generally light and coming soon after the big business in Canada it seemed worse than it was. Walt Matthie had contracted a route across Mississippi and Louisiana and then picked up his press material and doubled back to catch the schools that were now open.

The Greenville, South Carolina date was not good and with a late matinee at Augusta, Georgia on October 10th the closing date was posted. Business at Charleston about faced however and came through with the best date since Canada. Two good days were spent in Savannah, Georgia and with two turn-aways at Brunswick on October 16th put the wraps on an excellent season.

The train was loaded and headed for quarters, but no one was quite sure where that was going to be. Beatty had become disenchanted with the show's income after returning from Canada. Between shows at Brunswick Concello told Beatty that he was closing the show and if he wanted to buy it for cash he could have it. Concello's agent Tupper had planned to use an army air base at Alexandria, La. for quarters, but this was out due to the pending sale. It was up to Beatty to locate a quarters. Other quarters were scouted at Beaumont, Huntsville, and Orange, Texas. A last minute switch put the show into the Nacogdoches County Fair Grounds at Nacogdoches, Texas.

The show had opened in Texas and closed in Texas, but the two spots were as far apart as they could be and still be in Texas. This great show had established a new record after traveling 14,315 miles and showing 191 days in 122 cities. A grand total of 384 performances were given and only three shows had been lost.

Concello and Beatty had turned in a most profitable season and Clyde made his proposition to Art to buy out the whole works. The price was right and



The Ketchner, Ontario lot is shown with the menagerie top laid out with big top in background. Tyson Photo.

Beatty got the whole train except for Concello's private car which he retained, and he got all of the wagons and physical equipment. Clyde was able to put up part of the cash and he prevailed upon other business associates so that by the next spring all of the price was met and he had clear title to everything.

The 1946 season had produced the largest grosses of all time for a 15 car railroad circus. Art Concello's four years as an owner had paid off in seven figure profits for him. In late 1947 Concello returned to the management of Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey where he brought out many new innovations, including the huge portable grandstand. In later years it was Concello who was to save it from disaster and take the big show into stadiums and ball parks and then redesign it to load into tunnel cars and play major buildings as we know it today.

In December announcement was made that Concello's car was going to be replaced by an additional flat car to carry extra menagerie cages and concession equipment that in 1946 had gone overland. Clyde's hopes were now high and the future looked bright for the Clyde Beatty Railroad Circus. Somehow the show was never to really enjoy the success of the 1946 season ever again.

This story has been put together from various sources and only the major ones can be mentioned. Most of all we must thank Walter Matthie who contributed much invaluable information that would be entirely lost. He supplied a detailed day by day account of his activities for the entire season. Much other valuable data was furnished by him and transcribed by Gordon Borders. Physical details and Billboard searching was done by Don Carson and the final responsibility for putting it together was his doing. The excellent route book issued was also a good reference as was Bob Taber's Canadian inventory. The following are to be thanked for the

loan of photos used: Bob Tabor, J. Beardsley, Chet Slusser, Walt Tyson, and the Cripps Collection.

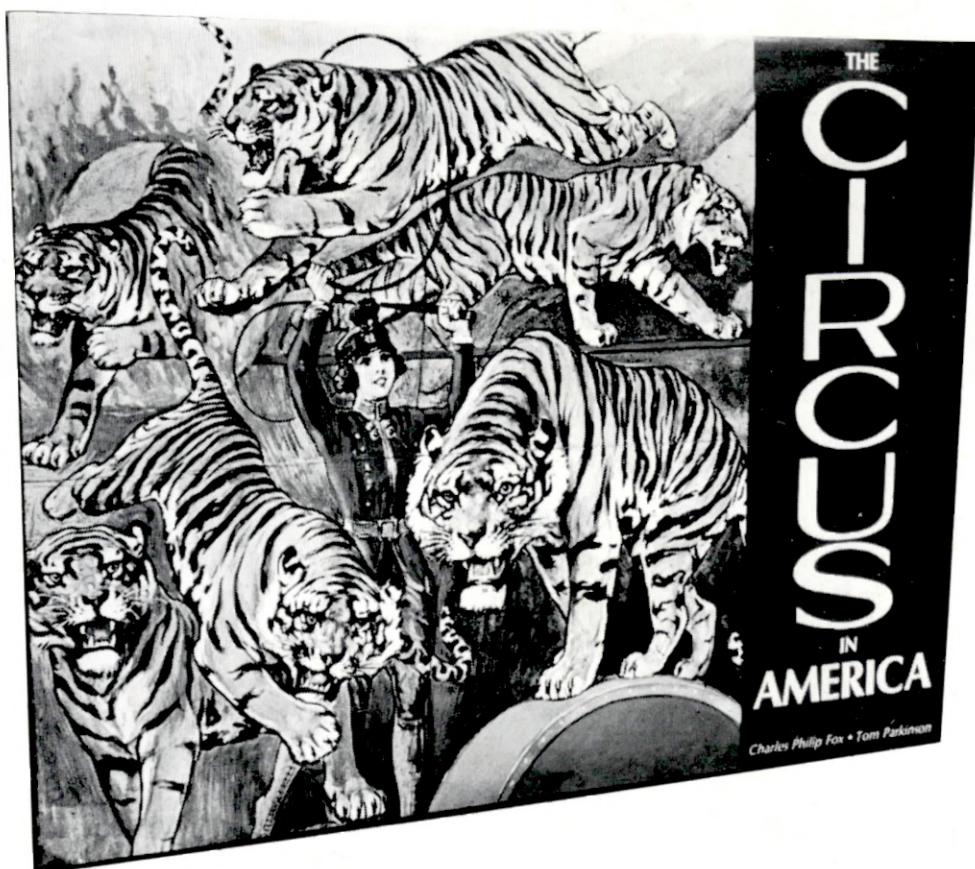
Key Personnel Clyde Beatty Circus 1946

Art Concello	Owner
Ira M. Watts	General Manager
Jimmy Albanese	Treasurer
Wallace Love	Auditor
Grace Killian	Paymaster
William Moore	Legal Adjuster
Edna Antes	Tax Box & Tickets
William Antes	Publicity Director
Jack Joyce	Equestrian Director
George Warner	Lot Superintendent
Waldo Tupper	General Agent
Walter Matthie	Contracting Agent
George Singleton	Contracting Agent
Raymond Dean	Contracting Press
George Brassill	Adv. Car Manager
Dan Dix	Twenty Four Hour Man
Elvin Welsh	Twenty Four Hour Man
Harold Genders	Front Door Supt.
James E. Watts	Transportation Supt.
William McGough	Reserve Seat Supt.
Emil Longozo	Head Usher
John O'Bryant	Train Master
John Staley	Chief Stewart
Floyd Lee	Supt. of Lights
Slivers Madison	Menagerie Supt.
George Werner	Boss Canvassman
Robert Reynolds	Supt. of Properties
Henry Kyes	Bandmaster
Maxie Tubis	Concession Manager
Pete Kortess	Side Show Owner

Wagon #12 carried the small light plant. It is a good example of the carnival style construction of the Beckman & Gerety equipment. Chet Shusser Collection.



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